NEW STATESMAN
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SPRING BOOKS
Selling off our oil
Report from El Salvador
The ambivalence of Mr Prior

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The typical British family

Whereabouts: unknown
Urgently required to justify government policies

How to construct a socialist family policy Page 6

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Duncan Campbell describes the official contingency plan for a new Dark Age Britain

The British way of life — after the Bomb

FURTHER AND FULL DETAILS of the government's plans for the aftermath of nuclear war, complete with plans for the resurrection of the central banking system and the 'summary execution' of unwilling workers have been obtained by the NS. The plans — a set of 'Briefing Material for Wartime Controllers' — were obtained in outline last year (NS 5 December 1980) but are now available in full. The Briefing is described as:

> classified information (which) is part of some background briefing given to certain officers designated to be senior members on the staff of the regional and sub-regional commissioners in war. It has been decided that it would be prudent to give the same information to London Group, London borough, county and district controllers (designate) and chief officers of police . . .

'Controller' and 'Commissioner' are of course terms completely unknown to our contemporary and roughly democratic system of government. Such appointments are, however, already planned, in some detail, together with the more powerful posts of Regional Military and Police Commanders, as the shadow government of Britain in crisis or war. 'Controllers' will be the existing peacetime chief executives of each local authority. Councillors are not appointed to the job.

This material — issued in 1976, but still current — is deeply secret, as well as being deeply ludicrous. The very first words warn that:

> The information given in this circular is not be be communicated to the Press or to any person not specifically authorised to receive it . . .

The wartime Controllers can only pass the information on to others on a 'need-to-know' basis, or if the government puts the country 'onto a war footing'. It is all hush-hush, giving details of the effects of nuclear war on law and order, industrial resources, manpower, and the monetary economy. The author of the circular was Duncan Buttery, a Home Office Assistant Secretary then in charge of the Home Defence Division.

The Home Office's observations on the effects of war are profound:

> In conditions of anarchy, the implementation of measures necessary for national survival would be impossible . . . (*para 4*)
>
> A large scale nuclear attack would disrupt the production and distribution of power supplies and hence most industrial and commercial activities . . . (*para 8*)

Above all:

> A large scale of nuclear attack on this country would completely disrupt the banking system . . . (*para 14*)

Clearly a serious matter. Indeed, 'even a small scale attack on London and the major facilities of the big clearing banks would have a similar effect. In a situation where power supplies would be cut off, public and private transport brought to a standstill, and industrial and commercial activities halted, the major sources of income would dry up.'

THERE WOULD also be the slight matter of a few tens of millions of the populace left in a permanent state of unproductivity. But, worse:

> money in its present form would cease to have any significance . . . in the survival period, when all efforts would be concentrated on providing the bare essentials of life . . . Some token exchange might be needed . . . It might be feasible to allow the use of existing currency (but) barter and the government issue of food and clothing would prevail.

A government monopoly of food and clothing might indeed quell awful anarchy. Other methods to be adopted include a new system of special courts administered by Regional Commissioners, and protected by armed police and military guards. The target would be citizens who didn't behave as they were told; and didn't accept the authority of a government which had just turned the place into a wasteland:

> The main resources of the wartime judicial and penal system would be concentrated against the anti-social conduct of individuals which seriously interfered with the essential life of the community.

But:

> In conditions in which death destruction and injury were commonplace, such penalties as probation, fines or sentences of imprisonment would no longer be effective in dealing with anti-social offenders.

No beating about the bush here. The answer is the great leap back into the Dark Ages, and the re-introduction of the stocks; plus — um — execution — but they don't quite describe it in such terms:

> Such penalties as communal labour, restricted rations, and exposure to public disapproval would be appropriate for all but the gravest offences, but in the case of flagrantly anti-social behaviour there might be a need for harsher penalties than would be generally acceptable in peacetime. Provision for appropriate penalties, not normally available to courts, would be made under emergency regulations . . .

The Home Office here displays an undue modesty and wordiness in explaining how business for the hangmen and firing squads will be booming come the day of the Bomb. Curiously, they find no such difficulty in expressing precisely their sentiments on the matter of what to do about workers who won't work:

> In the absence of effective sanctions, short of summary execution, for dealing with those who might not comply with directions, success in the allocation of labour, throughout the survival period, would in practice depend on the community's acceptance of the need and their voluntary co-operation.

There will be no tedious red tape to impede the passing of death sentences. 'In capital cases, wherever practicable, there would be . . . a court consisting of not less than three commissioners.'

The bureaucrats' design for a ship-shape, well-ordered, post-holocaust society.

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Our reference:
Your reference:

13. Regional Commissioners would have statutory powers to direct labour, but in the absence of effective sanctions, short of summary execution, for dealing with those who might not comply with directions,

14. A large scale nuclear attack on this country would completely disrupt the banking system on which the whole monetary economy is based.

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The 'commissioners' would be appointed from any one 'holding any form of judicial office'. An emergency court could be held 'anywhere . . . where radiological conditions permitted.'

No time for layabouts after the Bomb, either:

> . . . one aim would be to provide as many people as possible with some form of useful work to sustain morale . . .

Of course:

> the main demand would be for heavy manual labour . . . for such immediate tasks as . . . the burial of the dead.

And, at least:

> in spite of heavy casualties among the able-bodied population, there should be no general shortage of manpower, since industry as it existed before the attack would be virtually at a standstill.

Cheering to know that there wouldn't be a shortage of survivors to order around, just to establish who was the government and who wasn't. But, worryingly:

> national recovery to establish a new monetary system . . . might take a year or more, depending on the scale of the attack . . . it could not be assumed that the old currency would be redeemed . . .

Bad news there for the rich, unless their old style pre-holocaust Elizabeth 2 pounds were to be honoured, as the plans suggest might happen:

> at a considerable devaluation of its earlier purchasing power.

A sensible line of argument. There won't be quite the same choice of consumer goods in the shops, one might expect.

This gem of official planning for a sort of ideal post-nuclear world finishes up with the promise of the relaunch of money as a top priority:

> The creation of a new monetary system would be a national matter . . . Regional Commissioner would be assisted in these monetary and other economic problems by financial advisers drawn from the Treasury and the private sector.

No doubt a special Bankerbunker has already been allocated for this vital job. □

Readers who wish to further examine this subject may obtain the fuller New Statesman *critique of this document, appended to which is a copy of the document itself. Please send £2.00, plus a large stamped addressed envelope, to Bomb Offer, the* New Statesman. *The £2.00, less copying cost, will be sent on to the European Nuclear Disarmament Campaign.*

Patrick Wintour on union affiliation row

Right wins round in Labour battle

THE LABOUR Party's attempt to clarify the rules on how trade unions affiliate to Constituency Parties has come a little unstuck. Skilful interpretations of these rules by the EETPU, the electricians' union, led to an inquiry by the Party's NEC into the EETPU's affiliations to the Bermondsey Labour Party. After inquiry, the NEC wrote to the Bermondsey Party, ruling that they had been wrong not to accept all the union branch delegates the EETPU had put forward. Bermondsey has now refused to accept the ruling. At the worst, Bermondsey might be suspended by the NEC.

The problem arose last November after a rapid increase in the EETPU delegate applications to Bermondsey. The Left-wing controlled CLP had refused the delegates, questioning the bona fides of the branches involved. Now after the NEC ruling Bermondsey has accepted most of the EETPU's delegates but they are still refusing five, asking where and when the delegates' particular branches had met. Bermondsey thinks that these delegates' branches — three Telecomms and the General Office branches of the EETPU and EESA (the union's white collar section) — do not actually meet. Bermondsey says the delegates cannot therefore comply with the NEC ruling that they should be 'elected or approved by their branch.'

Bermondsey has asked David Hughes, the party's national agent, for the names of the officers of the five branches and for copies of notices of branch meetings sent to members. Mr Hughes replied on 11 March saying that the five branches must be accepted:

> As long as the branches have members residing in the Bermondsey CLP who are paying the political levy they are entitled to affiliate.

Bermondsey wrote back saying that Mr Hughes had avoided their main point:

> Are you saying we must accept affiliations from branches who never meet and the membership of which is not even known to the members? Your letter implies that we must accept applications from any branches nominated by the unions — indeed from as many branches as the union cares to create for such purposes!

Bermondsey have also refused to accept a delegate from the union's London Central branch who has been appointed centrally and not been approved or elected by the branch. London Central do not want the 'delegate' — Mr Lees — because they say he will not represent their views. It is within the EETPU rules to appoint delegates centrally: the union general secretary Frank Chapple's justification is that many of the branch meetings are unrepresentative and poorly attended. Last week John Spellar, Frank Chapple's *aide de camp,* attended a London Central branch meeting and insisted they must accept Joe Lees. One present says: 'the clear implication was that if we did not we would be closed down'. □

Peter Kellner reveals that social democracy means all things to all protest voters

'Moderate' hopes confused

EVERY SURVEY in the past six weeks has reported that 30 to 40 per cent of the electorate say they would support a Social Democratic/Liberal alliance if an election were held now. With the Social Democrats planning to launch their new party formally next Thursday, one of the more intriguing questions is, what sort of people are its supporters — genuine social democrats looking for a new political home, or a random collection of discontented voters, united only by their disenchantment with the current Labour and Conservative leaderships?

Unpublished details from a recent MORI poll conducted for the *Sunday Times* indicate that most 'Social Democrats' are malcontents with only a vague knowledge of, and partial affinity with, the new party's policies. The table shows the responses, on five issues at the heart of the new party, of the 30 per cent of MORI's sample who said they would vote Social Democrat in an election held now, if no Liberal were standing locally.

Despite the wide publicity given to the policy disputes between the Gang of Four and the Labour Party, less than half the 'social democrats' in MORI's sample know that Social Democratic policy is to keep Britain in the Common Market; as many as 37 per cent think the new party will actually seek British withdrawal. And more than half the sample would personally support withdrawal themselves.

On the other four issues, MORI's 'social democrats' are less out of line; even so, between 34 and 44 per cent appear to be ignorant of what the party stands for on any particular issue; and sizeable minorities hold views directly contrary to those of the new party.

There is, moreover, a close relationship between what 'social democrats' themselves want, and what they think — rightly or wrongly — the new party's policy to be. This relationship holds up with seven other policies MORI inquired about, where the new party's attitude is less well developed. This suggests that many, probably most, 'social democrats' see the new party not for what it is, but as a reflection of their own ideas of what a new party *ought* to be about. By definition, it will be impossible for the real thing to satisfy every supporter's wishes: many are likely to be disillusioned.

On the other hand, the evident degree of protest-vote support for the new party should not be dismissed by the existing parties. The fact that 83 per cent of 'social democrats' are dissatisfied with the Government's performance — while 60 per cent are dissatisfied with Michael Foot's leadership of the Labour Party — suggests that the new party could continue to do well in the polls as long as the big parties are thought to be doing badly. But this should not be confused with positive, overwhelming support for social democracy in itself. □

Are the gang of four hopelessly out of step with their supporters?

What 'Social Democrats' think

- What do you think the policies of the Social Democratic Party will be?
- Do you personally favour or oppose these policies?

(Figures show answers, in percentages, of people saying they will vote Social Democrat)

	Social Democratic policy?			Your personal view?		
	For	Against	Don't know	For	Against	Don't know
Proportional representation in general elections	61	11	28	55	16	29
Introduce an incomes policy	59	11	30	46	23	31
Take Britain out of the Common Market	37	45	18	54	37	9
Unilateral nuclear disarmament	26	56	18	30	60	10
Nationalise more industries	19	66	15	21	70	9

Latest on locker-room cache from Rob Rohrer

Police say weapons 'used as paperweights'

THE ARRAY of unauthorised weapons found in Manchester police lockers last month were confiscated from football hooligans and used as 'paper weights', according to one remarkable explanation offered by serving police officers to a Manchester newspaper. (At the Blair Peach Inquest a similar collection found in SPG lockers were referred to as 'mementoes').

The *New Statesman* revelations about the offensive weapons found at the City's Moss Side station are now being investigated by Deputy CID Head, Chief Superintendant Geoffrey Rimmer. Two days after the *NS* report, 6,000 other police lockers were searched: in some cases, where officers were off duty, lockers were forced.

The weapons' haul — including coshes, knives, a hatchet, and home-made clubs — came to light during a search for missing pornography. On 4 February the vice squad had seized 171 items from a city shop. A number

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of them subsequently went missing — but last week a spokesman denied that pornography had been stolen, explaining the discrepancy as an 'accountancy problem'. The senior officer who reported the weapons' find to the *NS* added that the missing pornography mysteriously reappeared days later.

The discovery of the weapons and a considerable quantity of cannabis, he maintains, was not reported to the Force's Y department which supervises internal discipline. The same officer told *NS* this week: 'I would have thought the investigation, with the clear allegation of a cover-up, should have been handled by an outside force.

'We've had another incident in E division where officers found incapable of duty through drink were not reported to the Chief Constable's office. It was hushed up and one man's duty was varied.' □

Gustav Moszcz on Polish Anti-Semitism

Persecuting Stalin's Jews

ON SUNDAY, 8 March there were two demonstrations in Warsaw. One was held by a joint group of students and Solidarity members, to commemorate the violent dispersal of student demonstrators by Milicja in 1968. The other was held by veteran members of the Polish Communist Party, protesting against the persecution during the late '40s and '50s of communist party members by the 'Jewish-Stalinist' wing of the party, who were then in control. This second rally had a distinctive anti-semitic flavour and it holds some worrying implications for the internal state of the Polish party in the delicate months ahead.

It may well signal the resurrection of a traditional Polish Communist Party tactic — the manipulation of anti-semitic sentiments to confuse and split an independent Polish workers' movement. It is most unlikely that the anti-semitic rally could have occurred without sanction at the highest level, which means that in some way it must have seemed to party chief Stanislaw Kania a necessary step in the Communist Party's struggle to maintain political control. In the past this kind of Party-sanctioned anti-semitism was used to prepare the Polish public for the Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. To understand the significance of the rally it is necessary to delve into the history of the Polish party.

DURING THE war the party formed separately in two fragments, one indigenous to Poland, the other in the Soviet Union. The Soviet section contained the remnants of the pre-war party, largely Jewish, which had fled the Nazi invasion. The pre-war party attracted a high percentage of Jews since it wasn't anti-intellectual, and was one of the few parties not to ostracise Jews.

The section in Poland was led by Wladyslaw Gomulka and was eventually purged by the Soviet based section of the party after its return to Poland. Gomulka himself was imprisoned in 1949; 'Stalin's Jews' had won the day.

But by 1956 Gomulka was back in power, with a different brand of Soviet backing, and the fate of Jews in the party was sealed. Gomulka and his functionaries — including the current party chief, Kania and the hardliner, Gen. Mieczyslaw Moczar — had their revenge. By 1967, during the Israeli-Arab Six Day War, the country was gripped by a mini-wave of anti-semitism, which ousted not only the last remnants of the Soviet wing of the party, but also dragged many non-political Jews into its mire. A vast wave of emigration ensued, which leaves Poland today with a miniscule community of some 2,500 elderly Jews.

IT IS NOT clear how Kania and his colleagues, which today include Gen. Moczar, could expect to use this tiny remnant of the Jewish community to resurrect the old image of Jews persecuting loyal party members. But the Polish newspapers are still full of daily revelations concerning petty corruption among party officials at all levels and calls for the expulsion of party members proven guilty of nepotism and other offences go unheeded. It thus becomes important to divert attention to the spectre of 'Zionism' and other easy targets.

Furthermore, five weeks ago the editor of the influential political journal, *Polityka*, M.F. Rakowski, published a long letter on the anti-semitic campaign on the 1960's, arguing that this ignoble chapter in the party's history should be aired. As Rakowski doubles as a deputy prime minister in the current government, this could have been too close for Kania's comfort. □

Rob Edwards reports that contract is signed

Go-ahead for Torness reactor

THE South of Scotland Electricity Board plans to sign contracts worth over £200 million within the next few weeks for the construction of Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactors at Torness, even though a House of Commons report last month said there was 'undoubtedly a case for not ordering' the reactors.

February's report from the Select Committee on Energy on nuclear power backed off actually recommending cancellation of the contract because of, in the words of the minority report, the 'considerable financial commitments already entered into.' But major contracts were signed *after* the committee had asked the SSEB to say how far it was already committed.

In November, the committee questioned the board, which admitted to having spent £76¼ million on minor items, including site preparation. Contracts for a further nine items were 'in course of being placed' and the SSEB were 'in the process of making' commitments amounting to £572 million.

So, in fact, at that time the legal financial commitment was relatively small. However, at the end of December — when they must have realised that the select committee was at least considering recommending cancellation — the SSEB signed contracts totalling £248 million. These were with the main civil engineering contractor, McAlpine, and with GEC for two 660 megawatt turbine generators and associated equipment. The further £200 million of planned orders are for the boilers, gas circulators and refuelling machines.

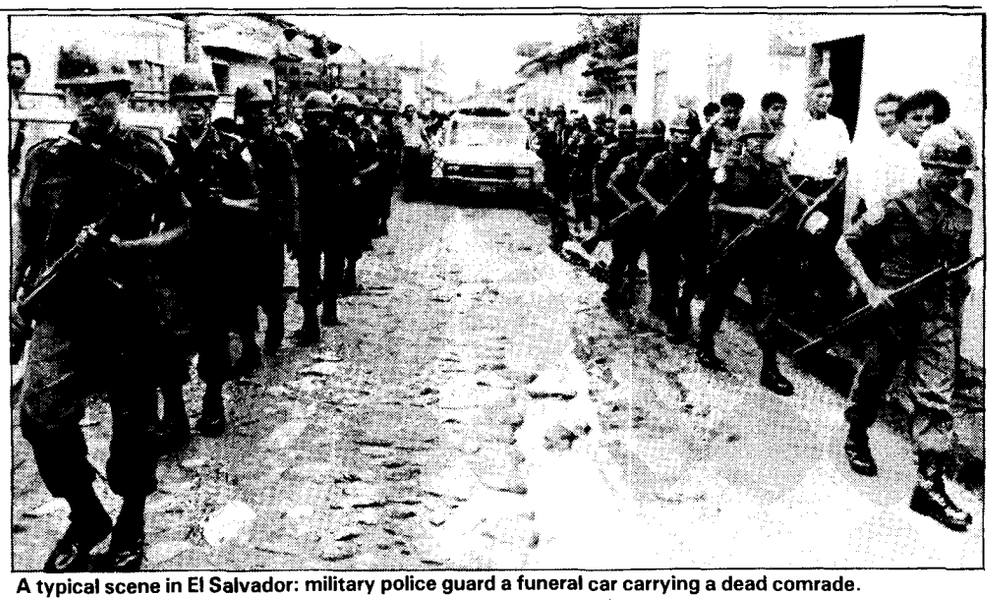
When asked for details of the costs of cancelling Torness the SSEB said they had made no estimates and subsequent correspondence between the chairmen of the SSEB and of the committee has not been published.

The case for halting Torness has never been stronger: as a result of the SSEB's exaggerated demand forecasts in the past Scotland is now burdened with a huge overcapacity of electricity supply and rocketing electricity prices. On the coldest day of last winter the two Scottish electricity boards had almost twice as much capacity as was actually required. □

EL SALVADOR

Napoleon and the Green Berets

BERNARD HALLORAN on the political weakness of Duarate.



A typical scene in El Salvador: military police guard a funeral car carrying a dead comrade.

THE GARRISON COMMANDER, a soldier unschooled in the complexities of the international propaganda war surrounding the Salvadorean conflict, was giving a group of foreign reporters his candid assessment of the military balance. The subversives, he said carefully, were an inferior fighting force; but, yes, they were numerous, disciplined and well-organised. Victory for the security forces would not be easy.

The colonel drew heavily on lessons from the January offensive, when his own barracks, in the centre of a busy provincial town, came under late-afternoon attack by a force of several hundred guerillas. Not one of the town's 45,000 inhabitants had reported the appearance of a heavy machine-gun in the tower of the central church, or the arrival of young men and women in olive-green uniforms to take up positions in surrounding buildings. Army, police and national guard were taken wholly by surprise.

The 'subversives' — aided by townsfolk, it was admitted — had sustained the assault for almost two days, withdrawing only when army reinforcements succeeded in fighting their way through.

The colonel was reluctant to claim a victory. He had lost an armoured vehicle and a number of his young troops. Had the guerillas been better equipped, he conceded, his headquarters might even have fallen, as others had done.

The superior fire-power of the 18,000-strong security forces was cited by other provincial commanders as the key factor in the military balance, and seized weapons are regularly displayed to illustrate the point. The strictly military items are all standard black-market issue: a handful of US M-16 rifles, machine-guns of American, West German and Israeli origin, with a few ageing Chinese bazookas. But there were sizeable numbers of shotguns, pistols, ancient hunting-rifles and home-made explosives.

No journalist has yet sighted a Kalashnikov, or any other East European weapon. Most significant, there is no sign of the anti-aircraft weapons which the rebels desperately need to

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counter the government's air-power. These would surely be available if there were serious Soviet-bloc assistance going in.

UNABLE TO FIGHT positional war, the left-wing forces have adopted traditional guerilla methods; sporadically heavy attacks from their strongholds in the mountains and countryside.

The war is accelerating: increasing numbers of US C-130s trundle into San Salvador's military airport with rockets, helicopters and the rest of the hardware offered by the Pentagon. And the first Green Berets have arrived to deliver instruction in the counter-insurgency techniques derived from Indochina. Already, the security forces have shown themselves adept at devastating villages suspected of harbouring subversion.

Against this background, some members of the government find it hard to accept Ronald Reagan's promise that their country will not become 'another Vietnam'. The tiny group of Christian Democrat civilians have been drifting closer to the hardline views of the military — and have tolerated the operations of the right-wing death squads. But now they question what outright military victory would mean — in economic terms, if no other — for a densely-populated country about the size of Wales.

President Napoleon Duarte was a member of the progressive government which assumed power at the end of 1979, but which saw all its reforms frustrated by the right's violent intransigence. Unlike the Social Democrats, and numerous members of his own party, he did not leave to join the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), which is the political wing of the guerilla movement. But he is now calling for negotiations with those former colleagues.

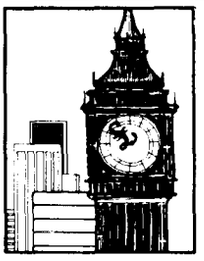
West Germany, Mexico and several other governments are willing to act as brokers, but so far the left refuses to believe that Duarte — whom they perceive as a figurehead — would be able to deliver on promises made at the negotiating table. Under his rule, they point out, the agrarian reform programme has been frozen, and Duarte has been incapable of restraining the death squads — which have been responsible, according to the Church, for 13,000 political murders in 15 months.

EARLIER THIS month, evidence appeared to support the left's scepticism. Roberto d'Abuisson, a former intelligence officer in the national guard, called for Duarte's removal, on the grounds that it must be treachery even to suggest a dialogue with the left. And a document was leaked to the press in which the economic ministry argued that the costs of social reform would outweigh any political benefit.

Duarte has appealed to Washington for aid, and received some encouragement, though not the $300 million asked for. (One suggestion is that Washington may look to Europe to pick up part of the El Salvador bill.) Significantly, Secretary of State Haig responded to d'Abuisson by saying that the Reagan administration was firmly behind Duarte.

Whether Haig can really control El Salvador's extreme right is still in doubt. But the real test of US policy may yet come from another direction. For the guerillas, at least, the war is far from over. Despite aerial bombardment, their forces remain largely intact; their popular support undoubtedly remains high.

As the rainy season draws near, it may well bring a major new guerilla offensive. In that case, everything will depend upon how well the Salvador army stands up in the next round.□



Peter Kellner, Political Editor

The discreet art of challenging Maggie

JAMES PRIOR wants to be Prime Minister. So, of course, do a number of MPs: the difference is that Prior's ambition is rather more urgent than that of most of his colleagues. He wants to unseat Margaret Thatcher and lead the Tories into the next general election. Moreover, he thinks he has a sporting chance of doing just that.

Many other people will regard Prior's pipe-dream as ridiculous (though personally I do not: if Ladbrokes were prepared to offer odds of five-to-one, I would advise punters among NS readers to have a flutter). The immediate point, however, is not what you or I think Prior's chances to be, but what *he* assesses them at. And since he assesses them to be quite high, he must act accordingly.

He must not be seen to plot or to leak too openly; and indeed he is doing neither. Press reports that Prior opposed the budget in cabinet, and asked for more open discussions in future, stem partly from a lobby briefing that Francis Pym gave last Thursday ('It became clear last night that Cabinet members had protested to the Prime Minister that never again should they be put in the position of hearing about such a fierce budget virtually without warning'. — Friday's *Times*) and partly from 'black propaganda' leaks against the wets by Thatcher's allies. If anyone is more leaked against than leaking, it is Prior.

The really hard part of Prior's task, though, is to appear for the next few months to support Thatcher's strategy in public without giving himself hostages to fortune: to create the illusion that he believes in deflation without actually saying so, to second the motion in such a way that when the tapes are played back in a year's time, it sounds as though he was heckling from the back row.

It is with this in mind that Prior's Commons speech on Monday bears close examination. In the normal course of events he would not have spoken at all, but Labour nominated its Employment spokesman, Eric Varley, to be the opposition's opening speaker on Monday; so etiquette demanded that Prior be the Government's opening speaker.

LABOUR'S AIM, of course, was to embarrass Prior: how would he wriggle out of this one? Prior's performance was masterful. He spoke for 32 minutes conveying the tone of someone who thought the Government could do no wrong; yet not once did he specifically defend the main budget measures, let alone commit himself to the notion that the Thatcher-Howe strategy will actually work.

Prior's first trick was to project the intellectual argument for deflation onto others:

> *I do not know anyone* who realistically expected anything other than a hard budget this year . . . *Nor have I seen any informed comment* that does not accept that a hard budget was necessary. (emphasis added)

The careful use of double negatives concealed the fact that Prior was giving no indication of his own views; he was merely defining the limits of his own economic reading matter. But before his audience could work that out, the conjurer had them concentrating on his next trick.

This was the straw man gambit. Prior proceeded to caricature Labour's policy, and then knock it down.

> Those who ask for a give-away — some Labour members have certainly done so in their speeches — and something to boost consumer demand at a time of deep world recession, are really asking us to get on the old treadmill of pricing ourselves out of goods and services . . .

No sensible Labour spokesman is advocating any such thing: if Labour came to power tomorrow, its first budget would be no mere 'give-away' affair simply to 'boost consumer demand': it would be to generate reflation by stimulating public and private investment and by bringing down the value of the pound.

Next Prior offers evidence that things are getting better. He is careful not to say *he* believes it, mind, merely that others do:

> The evidence from the latest CBI statements and from the North-West and the West Midlands has indicated that the recession is beginning to bottom out . . .

You can see it now: in a year's time, when Prior is asked why he stayed in Thatcher's cabinet, he will be able to say: 'We were told the recession was bottoming out. Unfortunately, the CBI, like many others, were wrong.'

After injecting his note of false optimism, Prior listed in minute detail the various bits and bobs that Howe had put in the budget to help industry, like the 'very valuable' £50 million being set aside to help the conversion of boilers from other forms of energy to coal. 'I have not heard this mentioned once during any speech in the course of the debate', Prior said, as if boiler conversion were the key to the regeneration of British industry.

But what about the 20p on petrol, interjected Labour's Stan Newens. 'Industrialists are up in arms about the effects of the budget on their businesses. Does he agree with them?'

Prior wouldn't say. He replied:

> The Hon. Gentleman has picked out one aspect of the budget and compared it with another, such as the increase in petrol prices. However, the budget must be taken as a whole . . .

Take the budget as a whole, however, is exactly what Prior never did in his speech, as he remorselessly catalogued every piece of encouraging news his civil servants could lay their hands on, whether or not it had anything to do with the budget. Indeed, the only point at which Prior owned to any personal opinion was when he said he was 'delighted' to hear that the Mini Metro had become Britain's best-selling car. Quite how this connected up with the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement was not made clear.

Finally Prior summed up.

> We are in no doubt that today's sacrifices must be seen to be fully worthwhile in years to come. All this makes it crucial that . . . every one of us responds in the right way. That applies to the unions, to management and to the Government.

And to the wets? —

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Fixing up the family

Why have the Tories, who once claimed to be 'the party of the family' done so little to improve the lives of families? ANNA COOTE examines the policies of the Thatcher government and finds it busy trying to reconstruct the family along new lines, for its own political purposes. She finds, too, that the Left has no real alternative to offer, and presents some initial proposals for a socialist family policy*.

MARGARET THATCHER informed us before the last election that the Conservatives were the 'party of the family'. She and her spokesman for social services, Patrick Jenkin, missed no opportunity to sing its praises at the hustings. The family was 'the foundation for virtually every free society known to history', they said, as they whipped up alarm for its future. The family was 'under pressure', as a result of 'profound changes in society'. They pledged themselves to defend it: government ministers, said Jenkin, should be asked to 'accompany any new policy proposals with . . . a Family Impact Statement'.

Two years and three budgets later, one might ask what the Tories have achieved on behalf of this noble but tottering institution. Let's begin with financial matters. The value of child benefit was cut last autumn so that over the year a two-child family would be worse off by some £70. This month's budget does nothing to restore its lost purchasing power, and there are signs that the benefit may come under further attack. In a speech to the Family Forum in November, Geoffrey Howe fired his first shot in public against the *principle* of child benefit. It was a departure 'from the idea of the State dealing with the family as a unit headed by the father' and this, Howe suggested, threatened to destabilise family life:

> Does the mother feel greater independence because she is not dependent on the father for the children's support? Does the father feel less need to provide as much for the housekeeping and for the children?

He would say no more at that stage, but the implication was clear: fathers are expected to be the main providers and child benefit, the key to financial stability for many families, is due to fall from favour.

Other benefits are being eroded, too. Families living on unemployment or sickness benefit have had the value of their income reduced since last year, when the government uprated national insurance benefits by five per cent less than the rate of inflation. Families of strikers are having £12 docked from their weekly benefit. Maternity allowance is worth less in real terms now than before the election and the Conservatives have made it harder for women workers to claim paid maternity leave and to get their jobs back afterwards. Larger families are poorer, especially those with below-average incomes, as Table One shows.

The 'party of the family' has maintained the notorious 'cohabitation rule' which prevents mothers of one-parent families from claiming benefit if they are thought to be sleeping regularly with a man. The same party has forcibly removed Filipino workers who have asked permission to bring their children to Britain; and it has continued to put the utmost difficulties in the way of Asian workers who want their families to join them here.

By no stretch of the imagination could it be considered a plus for the family that school meals services are being drastically curtailed, nor that school budgets are being cut to such an extent that many parents now have to pay for

WHAT THE FAMILY MEANS TO ME

by James Callaghan

THE family is the most important unit of our community.

That is why for the first time in our country, our Government is putting together what amounts to a *national family policy*. Our aim is straightforward: it is to strengthen the stability and the

prices or average pay — whichever is higher. In November we will raise the married couple's pension to £31.20 and the single pension to £19.50.

We have provided special assistant to help one-parent families to cope with their extra burdens. And we have introduced several mea-

our programme of *job creation* as an important pillar of our approach to the family. Our record is, in fact, better than a large number of our European neighbours, but that is not good enough. Labour believes passionately in the independence and dignity of the bread-winner, so we

essential learning materials. In one of his major pre-election speeches, Patrick Jenkin lamented the increase in numbers of 'latchkey kids'; yet as a direct result of the government's spending cuts, nurseries and other facilities for the children of working parents are now being closed down all over the country.

IN FACT, the Conservatives' family policy has not been about families at all, it has been about the role of women. When Jenkin warned that the family was under 'pressure', he explained that this was occasioned by 'the number of married women who now take a job outside the home'. As we suggested at the time (NS 13.10.78), the Conservatives were preparing to dismantle the welfare state, and to abolish vast numbers of jobs in health, education and social services, most of which were women's jobs. (School dinner ladies, home helps, hospital auxiliaries, nursery nurses, part-time teachers, cleaners, school helpers and town hall clerical staff are obvious examples.) This is now happening. Newly-redundant public-sector workers, as well as many other women who used to rely on their services to be able to combine family duties with employment, are returning to their homes. They will shortly be expected to provide a substitute (unpaid) service for the welfare state.

It has not been a coincidence; it is the result of a deliberate policy. 'We hear a great deal about social work . . .' Patrick Jenkin said in October 1977, 'perhaps the most important social work of all is motherhood.' In the same speech he stressed the virtues of community care and the value of the voluntary sector.

And last July, in an extraordinary statement to the Church of England Children's Society, he suggested not only that handicapped children should be kept at home in almost any event, but also that it was undesirable to spend public money on extra support for their families. 'Professional help', he said, could 'actually undermine the confidence and competence of ordinary parents'; what was needed instead was support from 'people operating on a self-help basis and making use of resources within the community'. It doesn't take a genius to work out that once the facilities and services of the welfare state have been withdrawn, the 'community' (of which the basic unit is the 'family') has few resources left except the unpaid labour of women.

Far from helping real families, the Conservatives have been engaged in *reconstructing* the family, in a mould which better suits their political purpose. Table Two gives some indication of the variety of family life as it was lived in 1978. The classic model of the 'typical family' — wage earning dad, non-employed mum and two kids — represents only 17 per cent of family units with dependent children, and only eight per cent of all family units. Fifty-one per cent of mothers with dependent children went out to work in 1978. In short, the family is not at all what the Tories claim it to be, nor what they want it to be. However, the pattern is changing as a result of massive increases in female unemployment. (In next week's NS Peter Kellner presents some startling new evidence of the numbers of women who are looking for work.) It looks like a considerable feat of social engineering, by the party which claims to abhor state interference in the lives of individuals.

ALL THIS BEGS the question: what would a Labour government do for the family? As it prepared for the last general election, Labour had no distinctive policy on the family — only a limp version of the Thatcher/Jenkin line. James Callaghan expressed his own worries about the 'impact on the family . . . [of] more mothers going out to work'. He suggested it was necessary to reorganise 'woman's role at work so that her influence as the centre of the family . . . is not weakened', and he took care to stress the value to society of 'those women who choose their families as their lifework'.

Labour, too, were planning spending cuts which would have had a similar, though less extreme effect on female employment both inside and outside the home. True, Labour had been responsible for establishing and expanding the welfare state, but the philosophy on which it was founded was a sternly patriarchal one: the Beveridge Report declared that the 'attitude of the housewife to gainful employment outside the home is not and should not be the same as that of the single woman. She has other duties. . '

*Based on *Family in the Firing Line*, by Jean Coussins and Anna Coote, published this week by NCCL and the Child Poverty Action Group; £1.20 from CPAG, 1 Macklin Street, London WC2.

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1 Real take home pay*

Average income	1960/61	1978/79	1980/81
Single person, no children			
× ½	34.80	45.40	42.57
× ¾	50.60	63.10	61.70
× 1	65.10	80.90	80.75
× 1½	93.10	116.80	119.04
× 2	121.00	156.40	159.79
Two parents, two children under 11			
× ½	39.50	54.20	55.72
× ¾	59.40	72.20	74.67
× 1	76.80	89.90	94.12
× 1½	106.90	126.20	132.14
× 2	134.90	165.40	174.15
Two parents, four children (2 under 11)			
× ½	45.00	66.90	64.72
× ¾	64.90	85.70	83.67
× 1	84.90	103.40	103.12
× 1½	120.10	139.80	141.14
× 2	149.00	179.00	183.15

*take home pay in Oct 1980 prices (£s)

◀ **Single people and larger families have fared worse. The rich have got richer (although they suffered a setback at the last budget). Figures include wages and child benefit minus tax and national insurance contributions. Source:** *Hansard* **22 January 1980; 12 January 1981; 9 and 10 March 1981.**

2 Families with dependent children

	No. of children	1	2	3	4	5+	Total
Married couple	Non-working wife	14.7	17.6	6.6	2.1	1.0	42.0
	Full-time employed wife	6.3	5.2	1.7	0.6	0.2	14.0
	Part-time employed wife	11.0	14.8	5.0	0.9	0.2	32.0
	Total	32.0	37.5	13.3	3.7	1.4	88.0
Lone mother	Non-working	2.9	1.9	0.9	0.4	–	6.2
	Full-time employed	1.5	0.4	0.1	–	–	2.1
	Part-time employed	1.3	1.0	0.2	–	–	2.6
	Total	5.7	3.4	1.2	0.4	–	11.0
Lone father		0.5	0.4	0.2	–	–	1.1
TOTAL		**38.2**	**41.4**	**14.8**	**4.2**	**1.2**	**100.**

▲ **Spot the 'typical family'. Hitherto unpublished government figures show that, even among those units where there are dependent children, there is an enormous variety of family types. Families with dependent children represent about half of all families. Source:** *General Household Survey*, **1978.**

TODAY, THERE IS STILL no such thing as a socialist family policy. We need to devise one — and in order for it to be genuinely socialist it will need to be a feminist policy as well. But there are a couple of obstacles in the way. The first is an ideological one, which concerns the priorities of trade union bargaining, and the argument that a male breadwinner should earn enough to support a wife and children — i.e. a 'family wage'. The second is a mechanical one, concerning the manner in which policies are formulated on the Left.

It is doubtful whether the 'family wage' was ever a reality for more than a narrow group of middle-class families. Working-class women, no matter how demanding their domestic duties, have always had to turn their hand to a bit of cleaning, child minding, sewing or suchlike, to eke out the man's wage. Nowadays, it is estimated that the number of families in poverty would quadruple if wives did not take paid jobs. Yet the ideology of the family wage is alive and kicking. Trade unionists still make use of it in wage negotiations, referring to the need of their members to earn enough to support a 'typical family unit'. Many admit they know it to be an anomaly, but insist that it is a useful 'bargaining counter'. And now, as unemployment figures edge towards three million, the idea of the 'family wage' may begin to take on a new signficance.

It lies behind the assumptions that men's jobs are more important than women's, that it is appropriate for men to be paid more than women, and that where jobs are scarce, men should have the first claim on them. These assumptions are widespread (see *NS* 7.11.80.) We have not yet reached the point where trade unionists are arguing for women to get back into the kitchen, but the scandalous proportions of female unemployment are not greeted with the same outrage as the lesser degree of male unemployment.

The notion of the 'family wage' helps to reinforce the Conservative argument that women are best employed unpaid at home, and that female parents are somehow *naturally* better suited than male parents to the tasks of keeping house and looking after children. And as such it undermines the claim that women and men should have equal opportunity at work.

A SOCIALIST FAMILY POLICY would need to provide a strong alternative to the family wage — and that would mean a radical reassessment of the components of family support. The policy would therefore need to address itself not only to the traditional areas of social policy (health, welfare, education) and matters of tax and benefits, but also to such questions as income distribution and economic planning. This is where we meet the second obstacle. In the Labour Party, the business of policy formulation tends to be segregated along sex lines.

For example, as Patrick Wintour reported (*NS* 27 February), the Finance and Economic Affairs Sub-Committee recently produced a paper on incomes policy. It contains an excellent analysis of the causes of inflation, and leads to the fine conclusion that 'we should pursue greater equality in income distribution' within the share of total income which accrues to working people. However, the paper does not go on to explore ways of redistributing income between men and women either inside or outside the family — which some would regard as essential. Evidently, the Finance and Economic Affairs Sub-Committee has not yet had its consciousness raised about the nature of patriarchal relations under capitalism! Perhaps that will happen eventually. But economic affairs have traditionally been regarded as a male sphere, and there is no automatic exchange of ideas between this committee and groups representing women's interests. (The latter are still seen as marginal.)

In the meantime, here are some basic propositions on which a new family policy might be based. First, we need a clear idea of what we mean by the 'family'. For our purpose, the unit we are concerned with is surely the *household where there are children* (or other dependants in need of care) — regardless of how many adults happen to live with them, or what their marital status might be.

Secondly, parenthood is a male function no less than a female one. Beyond childbirth and breast-feeding, men can do the job just as well as women, given half a chance. The same is true of all work that goes on in the home. A socialist family policy should be based on the principle of *equal parenthood.*

Thirdly, people should not be penalised for the mode of living they choose (unless, of course, it causes harm to others). Women and men should be able to decide for themselves how many children to have, or to remain childless, to marry, to live alone or to share accommodation. Our policy should be built on *freedom of choice;* and that should include a choice for parents (male and female) to work full or part-time, or to remain at home, while their children are very young.

Fourthly, if there are 'pressures' on the family as a result of women going out to work, it does not follow that women should leave the labour market. The problem isn't caused by the women themselves, but by the traditional manner in which family life is arranged in relation to paid employment. If fathers were to work shorter hours, and if there were better facilities for working parents and their children the 'pressures' would be greatly reduced. Our policy should be committed to *maintaining and expanding social provision* for families, to include not only nurseries, but eating places, social centres, laundries, help for the elderly and the disabled, recreation centres and so forth — financed out of public money and controlled by the community. That such institutions have earned themselves a bad name in the past does not mean that they are a Bad Thing: they need more resources, better organisation and democratic control.

Finally, a socialist family policy would need to ensure *economic equality* between families, as well as within them. For one thing, this would mean enabling male and female parents to take paid jobs on a genuinely equal basis — in terms of hours of work, pay and domestic commitments. For another, it would mean ensuring, as far as possible, equal support for children, independently of their parents' incomes. The most obvious way of doing this would be by a substantial increase in child benefit. If the married man's tax allowance were abolished tomorrow, £3 could be added to child benefit, bringing it to a total of £8.25 for each child, while still saving nearly £1¼ billion to raise the tax threshold for all taxpayers. So the money could easily be found. Ideally government should support children in roughly the same way as pensioners. Children would no longer suffer unduly if their parents were unable to work, or they happened to belong to larger families. Trade unions could focus their bargaining efforts on the needs of individual workers, and on ensuring that the government maintained and expanded the 'social wage'. There would cease to be any question of men having a prior claim to paid work.

There are, of course, a great many more questions which would need to be considered. These are offered as a starting point. When will the work on the details begin? □

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Witch-hunt on the Potomac

CLAUDIA WRIGHT describes Reagan's assault on his critics

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION has put into operation a plan for suppressing its public critics, muzzling the press, and silencing government officials that makes the schemes of the Nixon years look adolescent in conception.

There are three differences between the new strategy and the old, discredited one. Whereas Nixon began by targeting left-wing anti-war groups, and only later moved against mainstream political opponents within the Democratic Party, Reagan has started with the legitimate press and with his own civil service. A second difference is that the Republicans' cover story has changed. A decade ago the enemy was 'communism' — now it is 'international terrorism'.

The final difference is that the Nixon schemes were — as White House staff acknowledged at the time — quite illegal. If the Reagan scheme goes according to plan, everything will be perfectly legal. There will be no Watergate because the break-in will be pulled off by the FBI, with permission from the Attorney General, because 'deep throat' and all other leakers will have been purged, and because the *Washington Post* will have been persuaded by the White House not to investigate.

LAST AUTUMN several conservative groups backing Ronald Reagan began work on policy recommendations to follow victory. One was the Heritage Foundation, which issued a 1000-page script called *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration*. Another, the Institute for Contemporary Studies — a group established by Edwin Meese, Reagan's senior adviser (see NS last week), will shortly publish its advice under the title, *Politics and the Oval Office: Toward Presidential Governance*.

The first contains detailed advice for the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the intelligence agencies; the second spells out what the White House should do to eliminate 'the imperial media'. (When Jimmy Carter took office, his transition advisers recommended steps to curb the 'imperial Presidency'.)

In the Heritage Foundation there is an obsession with the press. Samuel Francis, author of the chapter on the intelligence agencies, who has just been appointed to the staff of the Senate subcommittee on security and terrorism, blames 'the problems of American intelligence' on a combination of 'mid-1970s enterprising journalists, irresponsible Congressional investigations, bad publicity, a few defectors, the Hughes-Ryan amendment*, and the freedom of information act', as well as 'factions within the intelligence community intent on laying low their bureaucratic adversaries.'

Another author, Michael Hammond, recommends reinstating and upgrading the old internal security division of the Justice Department — under Nixon this was the bureaucratic tool for attacks on the anti-war groups —the relaxation of restrictions on search, surveillance and other counterintelligence activities inside the United States, a sharp reduction in the access to official files provided by the Freedom of Information Act, and legislative amendments to enable the government to investigate and punish leaks or suspected 'disloyalty' among government employees.

For justification, these philosophers point vaguely to the supporters of 'foreign terrorist organisations.'

But, in fact, annual reports from the Attorney General and the FBI director suggest the incidence of terrorism in the United States has dropped since 1976. FBI statistics show a pattern of Ku Klux Klan and other anti-black attacks, the odd Armenian, Croatian, Libyan or Iranian attack against non-American targets, and Puerto Rican nationalist demonstrations but virtually no domestic terror from the left. Undeterred, Edwin Meese quickly received the go-ahead from Reagan to launch his anti-terrorism campaign.

MEESE, according to a press biography, is a 'man of two overriding professional passions: a love of police and law enforcement operations, and a love of the military.' The senior official on Reagan's staff, he has been an assistant District Attorney, police prosecutor, army reserve officer, and in charge of parole and clemency petitions in California.

In Meese's view the students who protested against the Vietnam war, not anyone else, 'cost a lot of American lives . . . and prevented our elected officials from taking the steps necessary to win the war.' About one man whom Berkeley police shotgunned to death during the People's Park demonstration of 1969, Meese still says: 'James Rector deserved to die . . . I was speaking in the context of what you can expect to happen when you try to assault a policeman.' (No convincing evidence was ever found that Rector had threatened the police in any way.)

If there is genius in Meese, or Reagan men like him, it is their capacity to dissemble deep hatreds in affability, while sustaining a fanatical determination for the exorcising of demons generated by their own imagination.

IN LATE JANUARY, Meese prepared a memorandum indicating strong concern about terrorism, and requesting new evidence to substantiate the problem and agency recommendations for dealing with it. The document went to Edward O' Malley, Assistant Director of the FBI for Intelligence; Daniel Silver, the CIA legal counsel; Anthony Quainton, director of the State Department's Office for Combatting Terrorism; Justice Department attorneys, and other intelligence representatives.

These men or their stand-ins met several times in early February, and agreed on two documents. One, a detailed analysis of the potential for terrorism in the United States, was classified secret. The other, drafted by Silver at the CIA, was a proposal for a new executive order to be signed by President Reagan, to supersede the order issued by President Carter (in January 1978) which regulates intelligence operations by government agents.

The second document (but not the first) was sent to the House and Senate intelligence committees for their comments, and on 10 March, the *New York Times* reported details from copies that had been leaked. Initially, the government denied the existence of the draft order. Then officials went to great lengths to deny that it represents administration policy. In an unusual step towards the limelight, Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, the former director of the National Security Agency (NSA is the principal signals interception and cypher agency) and now deputy director of the CIA, followed with a press conference. The only part of the new order Inman has rejected is the proposal that the CIA return to spying inside the United States. Activities of this kind — explicitly prohibited in the original 1947 charter — were exposed in 1974 and banned.

*The Hughes-Ryan amendment is a 1974 requirement obliging US intelligence agencies to report ongoing or anticipated intelligence operations to the Congress.

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Through Inman, the administration has attempted to deflect attention from other provisions of the draft order which would empower the FBI, military intelligence branches, and intelligence groups other than the CIA to return to the infiltration, phone-tapping, photo-reconnaisance, and black bag (search) jobs that were their modus operandi in the balmy days before Watergate.

The 16-page document, (which has been obtained by NS) is a subtle exercise in linguistic modification — 'restrictions' and 'limitations' in the Carter order become 'governing principles' in Reagan's; individual 'rights' turn into 'interests'; express prohibitions dissolve into discretionary permissions — and delegations of authority so elaborate as to prevent anyone discovering what happens, let alone who wanted it to happen.

REAGAN will never fall into the Nixon trap of personally ordering anything. Presidential approval of clandestine activities is to be delegated to the Attorney General, and his powers distributed to anonymous spooks who will not be obliged to show superiors that the targets of covert operations are engaged in unlawful activities. The old section requiring agents to obtain warrants where 'there is probable cause to believe that' the target 'is an agent of a foreign power' has been eliminated.

What the American press has so far failed to notice is that the Reagan order would once again permit the CIA and other agencies to operate undercover as journalists, academics, or missionaries inside and outside the US.

The foreign press operating in the US and the American press abroad are special targets of the proposed new rules. Both can be put under permanent surveillance covering mail, physical movements, telephone and telex communications; detailed files on journalists and their contacts can be established and disseminated from one agency to another; and any information which journalists collect, here or overseas, may be sought by American agents whenever 'the information constitutes foreign intelligence or counterintelligence.' That provision is so broad that even Alistair Cooke won't be safe.

But even if the entire Reagan order were abandoned, the White House has launched so many other parallel moves that it will be able to achieve the same result, almost without press notice. We have uncovered evidence that several of these moves have already been implemented.

In the Heritage Foundation scheme for stopping leaks to the press, careful attention is paid to 'broadly define the scope of "national security" ' so that it will be easier 'to treat the compromise of sensitive information with immediate dismissal.'

Note that the term used is 'sensitive', not classified, information — in other words, anything the White House doesn't want to get out. We have learned of the case of one senior official of the Executive Office of the President who was removed from his job with two hours' notice by Reagan officials on the grounds that as a domestic policy analyst he had 'the potential for becoming a security risk.' Normally allegations of security risks must be fully aired and adjudicated, but the purge in this case was based on the President's discretion, and no formal accusation was entered in the files.

Robert White, the former ambassador at El Salvador, who testified before Congressional committees that the military junta of Napoleon Duarte is responsible for the vast majority of deaths in that country, has been fired by the Secretary of State in a public warning against 'disloyalty' in the foreign service. Other State Department officials abruptly dismissed include members of the US delegation to the Law of the Sea conference, who were not trusted to put into effect Reagan's rejection of the draft treaty negotiated last year.

IF THESE ACTIONS do not terrorize government officials into silence, Reagan and his supporters in the Congress are determined to indict and jail journalists who publish awkward leaks. Last year's Intelligence Identities Protection Bill will do the trick.

The bill looks like — and is being defended by editorialists of impeccable liberal credentials as — an attempt to stop Philip Agee, Louis Wolf, and others who publish the names of undercover American agents. In fact, it does much more. It makes it a criminal offence for a journalist to disclose a wide range of classified information, not merely the agents' names.

For example, it would be an offence to publish information that might lead to the identity of individuals, other than employees of American intelligence agencies, who receive money from them, or who merely inform or provide 'operational assistance' to them. The class of these individuals embraces agents of allied governments as well as every petty collaborator with American policy the world over, so long as they fit this definition:

> an individual, other than a United States citizen, whose past or present intelligence relationship to the United States is classified and who is a present or former agent of, or a present or former informant or source of operational assistance to, an intelligence agency.

Foreign journalists working in Washington

Punch

HAS THE ROYAL SPRING ROMANCE GRIPPED AMERICA TOO?
DOES MICHAEL PARKINSON THINK HE'S A BIG SUCCESS?
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who happen on information about quislings at home would find themselves under arrest as soon as their despatches were published, even if the disclosures were perfectly lawful in the country in which they appeared. Foreign journalists are also the target of White House plans to limit access to official files and sources provided by the Freedom of Information Act. The Heritage Foundation report recommends limiting applications under the act to citizens and resident aliens — call this one the Shawcross Prohibition*.

Already, we have evidence of another technique for muzzling the press proposed in the Reagan plans and adopted by the FBI. The Reagan order has dropped the proviso in the Carter rules that FBI activities were to be 'conducted by the least intrusive means possible'.

In two cases involving foreign journalists working in Washington, the *NS* has discovered that the FBI used techniques which were deliberately intended to make known that the journalists were targets of investigation.

In one case, FBI agents telephoned an American newspaper which publishes the journalist's news stories, and requested his telephone number. Although this bit of information was independently available, the request was repeated on a second separate occasion in order to make sure the paper's senior editors knew their contributor was under a cloud. The intention was plainly to damage the journalist's reputation in his editors' eyes, and instill nervousness about running his stories in the future.

*The British author William Shawcross based his remarkable investigation *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* on documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (see NS July 1979 for serialisation).

AT THE WHITE HOUSE, National Security Council staff are under strict orders not to speak to the press without clearance by the NSC press officer who relays all requests for answers to Richard Allen, who denies most of them. Officials in the budget bureau have been ordered to clear all public comments with their press officer.

The White House view of the press is echoed in a report by Robert Entman, an academic from Duke University, and a recipient of money from Meese's Institute for Contemporary Studies. Most of Entman's report is taken up with a catalogue of ways in which 'the media can and do obstruct the President.'

Examples are 'confusing the President's responsiveness to their demands with sensitivity to the public interest; inhibiting private negotiation between the President and other national leaders; complicating executive management by magnifying conflict within the cabinet; and imposing conflicting standards of behavior which mean that, whatever he does, he cannot escape unfavorable judgement.'

Entman's report was leaked to a few favoured journalists a month ago as justification for restrictions the White House has intended all along. Hugh Sidey, the *Time* correspondent, wrote that 'logic suggests that (the) majority (of the White House press corps) be gently moved from the vortex of power — perhaps put across the street in the executive office building . . . responsible journalists could seek access to staff members.' Sidey sees himself as a member of the minority of responsibles.

The White House plan to suppress critical reporting and cultivate a group of journalistic toadies is understandable if for no other reason than that Reagan, Haig and several other cabinet members have trouble expressing themselves in English. When Haig closed a meeting with the British press corps during Margaret Thatcher's visit, he said with unconsciously apt Malapropism that 'I hope I've answered your question without heisting myself on my own petard.'

The terror of the truth which Reagan, Meese, Haig et al are intent on instilling in the press poses heart-rending anguish for individual journalists. There are those like Sidey who will be called for intimate *tete-a-tetes*. For others, like Dean Fischer of *Time*'s Washington bureau, who recently completed a glowing cover story on Haig, the call is even more enticing — Fischer has been reportedly offered employment as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs — Haig's mouthpiece.

George F. Will — who would turn himself into a jelly bean if that was Reagan's condition for admission to the Oval Office, and who beat a relentless drum for Reagan in the press last year — has been offered the opportunity to nominate friends for jobs in the administration, and rewarded with the presence of Reagan at a dinner party at his house. If the Reagan Administration has its way, you will hear nothing from Mr Will or the rest of the press except the chorus of their loyal croaking. □

TORIES

Break-up at BNOC

PAUL HENDRICK on the threat to our state oil firm

THE GOVERNMENT's Petroleum and Continental Shelf Bill gives the energy minister widespread powers to dismantle the British National Oil Corporation piecemeal, to sell the parts for any or no consideration and to emasculate BNOC as a commercial organisation in the interim. Doubts about the Bill have already been voiced in the Foreign Office and Treasury, who fear the bill will leave Britain without an effective national oil company.

As originally constituted, BNOC had three main roles. First, it was to be a national corporation to implement the two most important aspects of state participation — access to information on all oil fields in the United Kingdom Continental Shelf (UKCS) for the purpose of advising government and access (at market price) to 51 per cent of all oil produced. Second, it was a fully-fledged oil company exploring and developing in its own right with substantial equity interests in the UKCS, and third it was to be a major world oil trader with both equity and participation interests. The Tories have already decreed that BNOC should not exercise its rights of access to information. The present Bill will destroy its exploration and production capacity leaving BNOC as an isolated quango trading in participation oil.

The Bill carefully avoids any clear statement of intent to totally dispose of the 'Operations' side of BNOC. Instead, it contains enabling clauses giving the Secretary of State for Energy enormous powers exercisable with virtually no Parliamentary control. He would, for example, be able to

- instruct BNOC to transfer assets to newly-created subsidiaries and to dispose of such subsidiaries in such manner and for such consideration as he sees fit, handing over the sales

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proceeds to himself;
- seize shares in any subsidiaries at a price he dictates;
- instruct BNOC to hand over cash equivalent to its annual profits and its accumulated reserves (or, indeed, whatever he in his wisdom deems the reserves to be); and
- impose any interest rate he wishes in respect of borrowings from government (or, indeed, whatever he deems such borrowings to be) and vary such rate at will.

The exercise of some of the above powers would be contingent upon Treasury but not positive Parliamentary approval.

THE VERY existence of such powers on the statute book would, even if they were not immediately exercised, destroy BNOC as a viable commercial organisation. The enormous sums required to develop commercial oil fields are normally lent on the security of future oil production and the resulting cash flows. In BNOC's case, no such security would exist and no bank would lend. BNOC has in the past demonstrated its ability to raise large sums in this manner at very fine rates in varying currencies (for example the $800m Britoil financing) — much to the chagrin of the Tories who claimed at its inception that it would have to pay well over the odds for such funds.

BNOC would find it extremely difficult to obtain suitable partners for the consortia necessary to develop oil fields on the UKCS as such potential partners knew that their relationship with BNOC could disappear at any moment. The difficulties BNOC is currently experiencing in building up a suitable staff, given present uncertainties, would be multiplied.

It is ironic that a Bill which effectively destroys BNOC's ability to borrow commercially should claim as one of its main objectives the raising of BNOC's borrowing limit from £600m to £800m. In reality the Bill would reduce the borrowing limit by extending the definition of borrowing. 'Borrowings' would now include, for example, sums received in respect of forward oil sales (total 'borrowed' in respect of such sales outstanding at 31.12.80 was £300m) and also whatever figure the Secretary of State cared to stipulate as being due to him in respect of BNOC's commencing debt.

In their eagerness to milk BNOC dry of cash the drafters of the Bill demonstrate a crass ignorance of basic accounting and tax matters (see above). In stipulating that BNOC must hand over the entire proceeds of any asset sale, they ignore any liability to capital gains tax.

The drafters also ignore a number of other practical problems. If all that is left of BNOC is its trading arm, it will run foul of EEC regulations. As a purely national oil marketing agency with rights to 51 per cent of UKCS production at market price (as opposed to an integrated revenue earning oil company as at present) it would be open to an action under the Treaty of Rome's provisions relating to distortion of competition and influencing imports and exports between member states.

If any part of BNOC's 'operations' side were hived off, it would be impossible to ensure that ownership remained in the UK. In addition, any limitation on future investment would make it hard to raise money on the Stock Exchange. Furthermore, the hived off sections would have complete flexibility as to where to explore, produce or sell regardless of the political sensibilities of the government of the day.

THE PROPOSED break-up of BNOC runs counter to the current trend followed by governments of all political persuasions to establish state oil companies, for example, Petrobras in Brazil, Petrocan in Canada, Deminex in West Germany and Hispanoil in Spain. OPEC is currently trying to reduce the influence of multi-national oil companies in the oil market and to encourage state to state deals handled through state oil companies. State oil companies are being used to secure supplies by participating in overseas joint ventures (e.g., Deminex and Svenska Petroleum) and BNOC itself has been examining such oil provinces as Malaysia and Venezuela with a view to securing supplies for the UK from the late 1980's onwards. Within the UKCS, a state oil company would be necessary if the government wished to have the capability to develop marginal fields for national interest reasons. The government has clearly not learnt the lesson of Edward Heath's experience with Shell and BP in 1973: multi-nationals are a poor alternative as guarantors of supplies of petroleum.

> 4.—(1) If for any accounting year there is an excess of the revenue of the Corporation or any relevant subsidiary over the total sum required by it to meet expenditure properly chargeable to revenue account, the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury and after consultation with the Corporation, give the Corporation directions requiring it to pay, or cause to be paid, the whole or part of the excess to the Secretary of State.
>
> (2) The Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury and after consultation with the Corporation, direct the Corporation to pay, or cause to be paid, to the Secretary of State the whole or part of any sum which is or, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, ought to be standing to the credit of any reserve of the Corporation or any relevant subsidiary.

Clause 4(1) of the Bill shows how BNOC could be required to pay over cash equivalent to its profit, regardless of its need to finance capital spending. In Clause 2 reserves (accumulated profits, a often invested in fixed assets) are equated with cash in the bank.

One unquantifiable benefit which BNOC can provide is to analyse and interpret the mass of information available on the UKCS and advise the government accordingly in its dealings with the multi-nationals. Without BNOC, the Government has neither the staff nor the oil company mentality and expertise to evaluate each field in detail and to determine whether the proposed timing and method of its development suits the national interest.

Viewing BNOC as simply an investment, its break-up makes no financial sense whatsoever. Disposal of assets as a result of government diktat would inevitably take the form of a forced sale, realising low prices. The potential golden eggs which would be lost as a result of this slaughter include a cumulative positive net cash flow (even after heavy capital expenditure) of £1 billion by 1985 and the ability to raise additional cash at the government's bidding (as, for example, in the forward oil sale of £600m organised in 1980).

It is difficult to see any logical reason for the break-up of BNOC let alone for the inept and incompetent method now proposed. Perhaps the sight of a successful and prosperous state oil corporation accepted by the industry at large sits ill with the forecast made by one Tory MP in 1975:

> There may now descend on British oil operations the same dead hand of political control as is afflicting the steel industry, the Post Office and other sad examples in the public sector. □

Paul Hendrick was for three years a negotiator at BNOC, dealing with participation, operating and financing agreements. He now works in the corporate finance department of Courtaulds and is one of a group of members of Labour Economic Finance and Taxation Association advising shadow energy spokesman Merlyn Rees.

PRAXIS
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Editors: Richard J. Bernstein & Mihailo Marković

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RIGHT OF REPLY

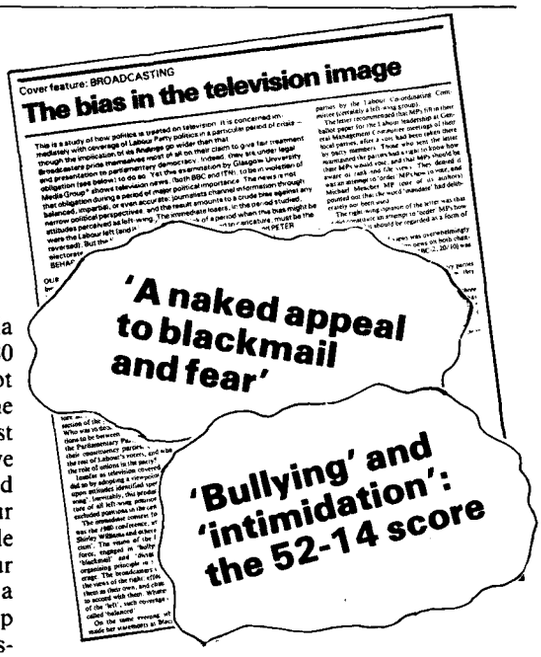
Legal, decent and honest

In our issue of 23 January, the Glasgow Media Group made some grave allegations about bias in the coverage of the Labour Party by the BBC and ITN. PETER SISSONS and PAUL McKEE now reply on behalf of ITN.

THE PERIOD analysed by the Glasgow Media Group is one of 22 days, from 20 October 1980 to 10 November 1980, from when Mr Foot announced that he would be a candidate for the Labour leadership to the result of the first ballot being announced. For those 22 days, we have examined a transcript of every word broadcast by ITN concerning the Labour Party. These transcripts can be made available to other organisations wishing to duplicate our analysis and, as we will show, they contain a complete answer to the Glasgow Media Group allegations. The central weakness of this Glasgow Media Group study, as in its previous work, is the way in which it systematically selects evidence to back up its views, and ignores material that inconveniently undermines them.

The Glasgow Media Group build their case against ITN on a study of three basic issues. Firstly, the general use, referring to the left, of words such as 'bullying' and 'dominating'. Secondly, the coverage of the row over the contents of the letter sent out by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. And thirdly, the moves against Mr Roy Mason by his local party at Barnsley.

These latter two accounted for just 8½ minutes out of the total of 102 minutes of air time which ITN devoted to the affairs of the Labour Party during the period. The Glasgow Media Group apparently chose to ignore the other 93½ minutes of ITN coverage, which included reports of meetings of the PLP and the NEC on


Cover feature: BROADCASTING
The bias in the television image
'A naked appeal to blackmail and fear'
'Bullying' and 'intimidation': the 52-14 score

the leadership issue, a CND march, interviews with Mr Foot on defence and Mr Healey on the economy, and profiles of the principal leadership contenders. Moreover, the Group's study excludes two-thirds of ITN bulletins i.e. *News at One* and *News at 5.45*. But even if we concentrate, as they did, on *News at Ten* and the late bulletins at weekends, their conclusions still do not bear scrutiny. For example, the Glasgow Media Group complain about 'adversary questions' not being put to Denis Healey in *one* context — the letter sent out by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee — but conveniently omit examples where such questions *were* put to him. Viz:

> *Interviewer to Mr Healey:* 'Now you say you are passionately concerned for party unity, but surely the best unity candidate is Mr Foot, who as well as a big following in the Parliamentary Party, has wide support in the constituencies.' (*News at Ten*, 6 November).
> *Interviewer to Mr Healey:* 'But they elect him (ie Mr Foot) to the NEC year after year at the constituencies. They don't elect you.' (*News at Ten*, 6 November).

On this topic of adversary questioning, the Glasgow Media Group also state that 'at no point *in our sample* is a right wing figure asked such a question as: "What had you got against people knowing how you vote?" ' But, because they omit over half of ITN's total coverage from their sample, they fail to note the following:

> *Interviewer to Ian Wrigglesworth:* 'Briefly why did you and your friends vote against the move to have the ballot completely open and public. Why shouldn't your constituency members, and the people who voted for you know whom you voted for?' (*News at One*, 28 October)

So the Glasgow Media Group are correct in their statement but convey a thoroughly dishonest impression of what ITN's coverage as a whole was like during this period. And it's the more dishonest because the Glasgow Media Group and their supporters seem to deny that such questioning could *ever* occur.

This selectivity also applies to virtually all the other premises on which the case of bias and inaccuracy is built. For instance, the Glasgow Media Group maintain that the broadcasters consistently ignored issues of policy. The facts are that more time was given over to Labour spokesmen criticising Government policies than to the sum of all the stories connected with the LCC letter, and on ITN more than thirty times as much coverage was given to profiles of the candidates for the leadership than to the internal affairs of the Barnsley CLP (about which, according to Mr Philo, ITN and BBC have an unreasonable fixation).

THE ORIGINAL Glasgow Media Group article stated: 'During the period of our study, there are 14 occasions when reference is made to "bullying" or other illicit behaviour attributed to the right. In contrast, there are 52 occasions when it is ascribed to the left with a small quantity of denials issued by both sides.' On the face of it, this is an indictment of blatant editorialising by the broadcasters, which would clearly be illegal.

The facts are these: in no single instance were the words, 'threaten', 'bully' and 'intimidate' used by an ITN newscaster without it being attributed to its source, whether specifically (Mr Denis Healey has accused the left wing Labour Co-ordinating Committee of 'naked blackmail and fear'; Mr Foot says he is against any form of 'intimidation' of MPs) or generally (Labour right wingers say that . . . etc., etc.). A look at the transcripts of the interviews containing the words that offend the Glasgow Media Group shows quite clearly that they were not invented or planted by the interviewer, but were the verbs and adjectives chosen by the interviewee. Thus in the interview with Mr Healey on 21 October:

> *Interviewer:* 'I want to raise with you, as an MP if you like, and not just a candidate for the leadership, the letter sent by Mr Benn's friends in the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, urging constituency activists to take a vote and order their MPs how to vote in this election. What's your reaction to that?'
> *Healey:* 'I found that absolutely disgraceful. It was a naked appeal to blackmail and fear and I read in one of this morning's newspapers that many, even of Mr Benn's closest supporters, were appalled. I think the best thing they can do for parliamentary democracy is immediately withdraw that letter and apologise for it.'

When ITN subsequently quoted Mr Healey this was nothing more than the straight and legitimate reporting of an unusual development which ITN did not create. But the Glasgow Media Group see the re-use of the words as an act of bias. Incidentally, the Group omit from their transcript of this Healey reply the reference to Mr Benn's supporters being appalled by the letter. So Mr Healey's inconvenient observation which doesn't quite fit the thesis of the left united behind the letter gets the blue pencil.

The interviewer's question in this example is also important. It makes the assumption that the intention of the letter was to ensure the MPs were *ordered* how to vote by their local GMCs. The Glasgow Media Group object strongly to this interpretation and state: 'Those who sent the letter . . . denied it was an attempt to "order MPs" how to vote, and Michael Meacher MP (one of its authors) pointed out that the word "mandate" had deliberately not been used.' This is a point answered in a letter to the *New Statesman* on 30 January, by Phillip Whitehead and Austin Mitchell, two MPs with extensive knowledge of the news media: 'For the Philocrats to endorse the committee's own view of it (the letter) as merely "a letter recom-

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mending local constituency parties to summon their MPs to explain how they intended to vote" is surely naive when parties were being asked to vote their own preference, then demand that the MP fill in his ballot paper on their instructions, all this with the explicit threat that "a new era of cooperation from MPs will come with reselection".'

THE COVERAGE by television news of the affairs of the Barnsley CLP is the third main area of the Glasgow Media Group critique. Most of the criticism on this topic is aimed at the BBC, for no other reason than that they gave far more coverage to it than did ITN. The following paragraph is the only ITN reference to the story during the entire study period:

> 'The former Labour Cabinet Minister, Mr Roy Mason, has told the Yorkshire miners and their President, Mr Arthur Scargill, that they must not bludgeon Labour MPs into submission in the election for the leadership. The left wing in Mr Mason's local party in Barnsley wants him to back Mr Michael Foot, and they say they'll drop him if he doesn't. Mr Denis Healey is still preferred by many former ministers. A look at Mr Healey's claims to lead the party by our political correspondent, David Walter . . .' (*News at Ten,* 31 October)

Despite the small coverage ITN gave to Barnsley, the central criticism made by the Glasgow Media Group remains: that it is deliberately misleading to suggest that Barnsley's left wing miners alone could bludgeon or otherwise impose sanctions on anybody. Even a cursory re-reading of the above ITN item, however, makes it plain that ITN is not attributing any propensities to the Yorkshire miners; ITN is reporting a remark of Mr Mason.

But even if ITN had referred to the NUM 'dominating' the Barnsley Labour Party, would we have been committing a factual error? *Labour Weekly,* on 30 January, published a letter written by Mr Trevor Lindley who said he'd been a regular attender at party meetings in Barnsley for the last 14 years. What Mr Lindley did not say is that he was the Labour Party agent in Barnsley at the last election, and is also the party's membership officer. Here are some extracts from Mr Lindley's letter:

> If the media group (ie the Glasgow Media Group) are to be credible, they really should be balanced, impartial and accurate themselves . . . I find the suggestion that 'Arthur Scargill's miners' do not dominate the party, to be incredibly naive. The miners and their leaders have dominated political events in Barnsley since at least 1885, and no one, including me, is suggesting they should not . . .

Mr Lindley's letter was challenged in *Labour Weekly* on 13 February in two further letters from Barnsley. Neither of these letters disputes the fact that the Barnsley party has a left wing majority. So the point at issue boils down to the role of the NUM in Barnsley. Do they dominate? The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines dominate as: 'Have commanding *influence* over; be the most *influential* or *conspicuous.*' It is ITN's information that this describes the role of the NUM in the Barnsley Labour Party.

In conclusion, ITN submits that the findings of the Glasgow University Media Group came close to being a political tract, with material being selected quite unscrupulously to substantiate its main beliefs. For this to masquerade as academic work is the gravest disservice that can be done to the conscientious researcher. We invite any open and fair minded observer to judge us on *all* the facts, not a selection from them. □

Diary

FRANCIS WHEEN

■ The defection of Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler — or 'Chris Fowler', as he styles himself when canvassing working-class electors — is a distraction from the Burning Issue of the Week, which is: Will the *Daily Mirror* join the Council for Social Democracy? The people's paper, which has hitherto been cool towards the socdems, has been badly shaken by the decision of the great Marje Proops to sign up with Uncle Woy's gallimaufry of gambols. Now another shock is on the way: when the social democrats actually form themselves into a party (with a grand phone-in) they expect to receive a membership application from Hugh Cudlipp. The distinguished newspaperman said that I was being 'premature' when I taxed him on the subject this week, but he did add: 'Like all intelligent socialists I'm wondering where I'll be in 12 months' time.' Staff at the *Mirror* are now taking bets on which other colleagues of theirs will heed the siren voices from Limehouse; my money's on Andy Capp.

■ Talking of social democrats, I hear that Bill Rodgers and his chums are becoming rather irked by the antics of Lord George-Brown. When the Council for Social Democracy was founded, its leaders agreed to prowl and prowl around for a while, only fighting an election when they could be sure of winning. Now, proving the truth of the old saw about fools rushing in, George-Brown has announced his intention of putting up 'social democratic' candidates for the Greater London Council elections in May. These candidates, who will almost certainly do very badly (would you vote for Stephen Haseler?), are from the hard-faced Social Democratic Alliance rather than the cuddly Council for Social Democracy; but not everyone will appreciate the distinction, and some of the bad publicity from their electoral failure is bound to rub off on the CSD. What's doubly galling is that Lord George-Brown, despite his trumpetings of support for the CSD, has not even bothered to join the social democratic grouping in the House of Lords.

■ I think I know the name of the civil servant who leaked budget details to the *Sunday Times,* but wild horses armed with knuckledusters wouldn't drag it from me. Nor would Sir Robert Armstrong, Secretary to the Cabinet, who has been asked by Mrs Thatcher to investigate the matter. However, I do wish to help the PM in her quest for those who reveal Budget secrets before the starting pistol has been fired, so perhaps Sir Robert would like to investigate the following case. Two months ago, on Monday 14 January, a senior Cabinet minister gave a private briefing to the political editors of *The Times,* the *Guardian,* the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times.* The journalists were told that, contrary to some speculation at the time, the Budget would not increase the basic rate of income tax from 30 pence. Instead, money would be raised by other means — higher duties and so forth. The next day, all four papers carried stories to this effect, without naming their source. The 'leaker' concerned was the Rt Hon. Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Prime Minister and First Lord (*sic*) of the Treasury.

■ Tom O'Carroll, head of the Paedophile Information Exchange, has been jailed for two years for 'conspiring to corrupt public morals'. I have no great fondness for Mr O'Carroll; when I interviewed him a few years ago I was shocked by the calm and reasonable-sounding manner in which he suggested that the age of consent should be lowered to *four.* Another PIE activist used to be my gym master at school, and I have never properly forgiven him for the way in which he took advantage of his position of authority by putting his hand down our gym shorts, knowing we wouldn't dare to complain. Nonetheless, Tom O'Carroll's conviction is a gross miscarriage of justice. The Home Office, the Law Commission and the Williams Committee have all called for the abolition of the offence of 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals', but nothing has been done. When the Attorney-General decided to nail PIE, but could not think of any criminal offence they had committed, he wheeled out this charge for the very reason that it is one against which the accused person cannot mount a defence. What *are* 'public morals'? There is no official list of them; therefore you *cannot* know, at the time of committing the 'offence', that you have broken the law. Tom O'Carroll is such a universally reviled figure that I don't expect any other papers to support him: the general attitude seems to be that it's quite acceptable for normal rules of justice to be ignored when the defendant is an unpopular figure. Only 'decent people', it seems, are entitled to a fair trial.

■ When writing the diary some months ago (1 August 1980) I previewed the case which the Ceylon government was bringing against B.A. Siriwardana, editor of the Sinhalese newspaper *Aththa.* A kind friend in Colombo has now sent me a copy of the judgment, and it's a corker. The trouble started when an MP from the UNP▶

Roger Woddis

Whom the gods destroy

Representatives from leading industrial companies attended a seminar this week to hear from experts what will happen to their businesses in a nuclear war.

Do you want to know what will happen?
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We'll put you in the picture, gentlemen,
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Now who's got the first question?
Don't just sit there being curious —
What's that, sir? Is civil defence spurious?
Why, no, though speaking as a certified
Home Office scientist, one must admit
A holocaust would be somewhat injurious.

For example, ICI and Shell UK
Will be operating on a slightly smaller scale,
And the Post Office might have problems
In delivering the mail.

But every cloud has a silver lining,
And from the information we have to go on,
I'd say there's quite a packet to be made
From building fall-out shelters and so on.
It won't prevent the population declining,
But it will be good for trade.

Of course we all want peace
Desperately, and no one wants to cop it,
But the arms-race is a fact of life,
And we'd rather die than stop it.

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(Ceylon's ruling party) made a rather abusive speech about Karl Marx; *Aththa* promptly published an editorial which said that MPs 'should be taught not to make bull-like statements about things they do not know'. It described the MP's speaking style as, variously, 'barking', 'braying' and 'bellowing', and it concluded: 'When he speaks of things that he does not know about and when he speaks like a donkey, we feel like punching him in the jaw.' After some hesitation, the country's Attorney-General charged the editor with 'publishing defamatory statements reflecting on the proceedings and character of the House'. In his defence Siriwardana pleaded fair comment, and pointed out that the UNP's own newspaper, *Dinapatha,* often used equally strong language: it had, for instance, referred to leftist MPs as 'racketeers', 'drunkards', 'thugs', 'blood-sucking water serpents' and 'fattening like Chinese pigs'. Chief Justice Samarakoon was unimpressed; he also noted that standards had now slipped so low that even MPs themselves had, in recent months, used such words as 'puppies', 'fellows', 'chaps' and 'buggers' to describe fellow members. An example had to be set: Siriwardana was convicted and fined 300 rupees. (Fortunately for him, this is the equivalent of about £8.)

■ It's been a marvellous month for poetry. A fortnight ago I went to the Poetry Society to hear readings by Vicki Feaver and Carol Rumens, each of whom was launching her first book of poems; very good they were too. (Andrew Motion reviews them on pages 18 and 19 of this week's issue.) Vicki Feaver appeared again last week, with about a dozen more of our best young poets, reading at the Old Red Lion is Islington. All proceeds (about £150, I hear) will go to the El Salvador human rights campaign. Again, the work on offer included much to make one believe that British poetry is in pretty vigorous health. Then, on Monday night this week, I returned to the Poetry Society to hear David Sweetman read from *his* first book of poems *(Looking Into the Deep End,* Faber, £3), which had an extremely favourable reception. Finally, it is my pleasant duty to announce that, from next month, Craig Raine will be Poetry Editor of the *NS.* Craig is, of course, a considerable poet in his own right — as is evidenced, in a funny sort of way, by the fact that he is the youngest person ever to have his or her poetry made the subject of a Weekend Competition.

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☐ Atom bombs, used prayerfully, could be God's agents for peace in the world. And total nuclear war could be God's means to usher in total peace in His Kingdom. Those are the controversial conclusions of Christian authoress Winifred Eastment, in her meditation on war, peace and prayer entitled 'God Help Us'. — *Redbridge Guardian & Independent* (U. Johnson)

☐ MPs who want tickets for England's game against Scotland at Wembley in May have been asked for written guarantees that they will not pass them on. The Football Association is determined that no tickets should find their way into the hands of Scottish supporters. — *Daily Telegraph* (D. Rigby)

☐ A shoe company in Wellingborough, Northants, is producing a pair of men's shoes in the design of a Union Jack with the Prince of Wales's motif on the toes to celebrate Prince Charles's engagement. — *Daily Telegraph* (G.M. Moger)

Alive, alive, oh

Arthur Marshall

FEW OF the great theatre beauties of the recent past — among them, Gladys Cooper, Vivien Leigh and Diana Wynyard — were at all vain about their stunning looks and, going back a bit further, Stella Patrick Campbell, a sensational sight in her day, was even able to make jokes ('I look like a burst paper bag') about her spreading figure and vanished charms. She made up for it in a way by developing the sharpest tongue in Shaftesbury Avenue and on Broadway and she became a dreaded visitor to dressing-rooms, gleeful in disaster and especially on first nights when the gallery had been both disapproving and noisy ('I *say,* didn't they boo!' was her jovial greeting to Miss Laurette Taylor, a visiting American star). On another occasion and on being introduced to a famous actress whom she had never met, Mrs Campbell muttered and in a booming voice that was accustomed to reaching the furthest corners of vast theatres, 'Thought she was dead.'

No, not dead, and not even ailing. But as to the genuine defunct, Hamlet once remarked when, as so often, in pensive mood (did he, one wonders, ever ask himself whether his legs were fully suited to those black tights? I've seen some very rum underpinnings in my time, including those of Sir Frank Benson, a collector's item) that there is a noticeable and regrettable lack of persons who manage to return from Beyond and spill the beans about the hereafter, though on this subject I did once get a short, sharp shock. I had been saddened during the war by the supposedly correct news that reached me in the army of the sudden death in Oundle of the delightful man who ran a gramophone and record shop and who had kindly supplied me down the years with countless celluloid Hits from the Shows, many of which are with me still (Elsie Randolph in *That's A Good Girl* is especially tuneful) and, though some of them are over fifty years old, sound as good as nearly new. In those happy days, if you ordered a record on Monday, you got it on Wednesday. If you did that nowadays, improved transport conditions, the devoted work force and progress generally would ensure that you waited three weeks for it, and then possibly received the wrong record, badly bent.

Returning to Oundle after the war and making my sedate way by three-speed bicycle down one of its two main thoroughfares (it's as beautiful a small stone town as you could wish to find), whom should I suddenly see upon the pavement but my gramophone friend, not in the least dead but bright as a button and doubtless on his way to deliver some Hits from the Shows, by now *Oklahoma* and *Brigadoon,* to an expectant customer. To find him alive and kicking was a heart-stopping moment. I briskly dismounted, we had a warm reunion and I then found myself asking 'Are you better?' He looked, as well he might, nonplussed, not realising that as far as I was concerned he was fresh back from the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns, and so on, and where I rather doubt whether they have gramophones and 10 inch records of the Astaires singing numbers from *Lady Be Good,* with George Gershwin at the piano. And more's the pity.

And bless me if, the other night, a similar sort of ghostlike shock didn't take my breath away all over again. Dinner (home-made leek-and-potato soup, shoulder of lamb and the necessary additions, onion sauce being a must, and then *les fromages*) in 'Myrtlebank' was over, the last glass of a reputable claret had gone down the red lane (well, it's my only proper meal of the day), and a sense of repletion and well-being was mine. Then, like many another fan up and down the country, I moved to the television set and switched on for *Dallas.* There they all were and in glorious colour — Miss Ellie (such a relief that she seems to have kicked the drink habit that briefly threatened her), Lucy (shacked up now in marital bliss and in that condominium), J.R. (the devil himself in human form) and poor old Sue Ellen, blubbing as usual though I've taken to wondering whether by now, so determined and unbridled has been her boozing, it isn't tears of gin that pour in wet profusion down her face.

It will be recalled by devotees, and will surely come as a happy surprise to those few who know not *Dallas* and who may thus be coaxed into viewing this enthralling series, that at one point poor old Sue Ellen, reacting strongly to the discovery of yet another of J.R.'s infidelities (girl secretaries, shorthand pads at the ready, disturb him quite terribly), tottered tipsily into a bar largely frequented by cowboys and secured for herself an, er, admirer called Dusty, who turned out not to be actually a cowboy himself but active in the cattle trade and tremendously rich, which is always such a comfort, don't you think? This wealth proved to Sue Ellen that Dusty admired her for herself alone and not because of her extremely close connection with Ewing Oil. So for quite a time she dried her tears and smiled and dimpled up no end at Dusty, and Dusty kept proving over and over again in his expensive apartment how much he admired Sue Ellen. But affluent cattle barons tend to own private aeroplanes, and private aeroplanes are never quite as safe as public ones, and one distressing and disastrous day, Dusty crashes and, according to a newspaper report, becomes dead and therefore unable any more to admire Sue Ellen in the way that they both found so stimulating and agreeable. So back she hurries, and who wouldn't, to the gin bottle.

Momentarily abandoning *Dallas* in order to stoke up the fire with logs fetched from the hall (the extensive grounds of 'Myrtlebank' supply all our needs in the way of wood, trees dying from time to time just like anybody else), I resumed my seat and adjusted my viewing spectacles, only to jump out of my chair with a cry of astonishment for there, large as life, was Dusty, returned from the dead. Well, not perhaps quite as large as life but paralysed and in a wheelchair and very busy explaining to Sue Ellen, every inch of her a sodden mass of tears and her face working convulsively, that the little mishap had made any further admiration out of the question. She might not think that this mattered, but it would. However much she might admire him still, he would never be able to admire her right back. This feeling of inadequacy in the field of admiration was, I can only think, the reason why he never sent her, at the very least, a newsy post-card from his hospital bed.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch. . . ☐

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LETTERS

Ireland: a history

From Dr Noel C. Browne TD

Mary Holland (NS 6 March) is correct in saying that in the de Valera tradition Mr McBride, Foreign Minister in the '48-'51 Coalition Government, refused America's invitation to join NATO on the grounds that 'any military alliance with or commitment involving joint military action with the state that is responsible for the unnatural division of Ireland . . . would be entirely repugnant to the Irish people'. Recent publication of the Truman Papers, however, shows another side to the story.

An American offer to join NATO was made and an official with the State Department observed 'they (McBride) replied that they would be delighted to join NATO provided that we (the US) could get the British to give back the six northern counties. We simply replied in effect that it was nice knowing you. And that was that.' Subsequently the US National Security council considered a new proposal devised between George Garrett, the then American Ambassador, and Sean McBride, which was designed to offer a possible backdoor to NATO. It suggested a bilateral US/Irish defence treaty. Garrett told Truman that McBride had 'volunteered to make an all-out effort to secure bi-partisan support for such a bi-lateral treaty.' The offer was rejected by the US. It appears that 'better in short to disappoint Dublin than offend London' was their attitude. So much for Irish/American political clout about partition, then, as now.

It appears, however, that in his attempts to barter the six counties for our neutrality, Mr McBride sought military assistance from the United States: 'in the event of Communist invasion, Ireland would be quite defenceless'. He further visited the United States in March 1951 and personally lobbied both Acheson and Truman for a bilateral Irish/US military defence agreement. It was rejected.

The relevance of these facts is this. In the first place, as a member of his political party and as a cabinet colleague, though suspicious at the time, I learned with certainty of these negotiations when I read them for the first time in the *Irish Times* on the 5 November 1980, as extracts from the Truman Papers of the 1950s. Its further relevance is that many of us now believe that a bi-lateral defence pact is being secretly discussed between Haughey and Mrs Thatcher, which will lead to the abandonment of our neutrality. It is feared that like the McBride precedent, Mr Haughey's colleagues and the rest of us will learn about them in 30 years time if they are unsuccessful, when the Thatcher Papers for the 80s are released.

Dail, Dublin

With honour

From James G. Murray, General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers

Through the columns of your newspaper may I confirm I am a devoted supporter of investigational journalism, and in recent years many of us have seen the useful results that have been achieved by good sound journalism. My attention has been drawn to Rob Rohrer's article (*NS* 6 March) which sets out to expose 'The corruption of union democracy' and in that journey, how sad it is, he did not take the opportunity of thoroughly investigating the events by conferring with members of my Executive Council.

Your readers will observe Mr Rohrer confirmed he had 'attemped to discuss the remarkable course of last year's election with myself' but what he failed to inform your readers was that, after he had compiled the substance of his article, late on Tuesday, 3rd March, 1981 at 10.30 pm he telephoned me at my home asking me to make comment and give observations. When he made that telephone call he was aware that High Court proceedings were in train, and in consequence of there being pending litigation between Barry Williams the Boilermakers Society and myself. I was that evening (and I am today) in the difficult position of having to respect my legal advisors who forbade me to make comment thereby interfering with the true course of justice which is near and dear to us all.

By far the most serious aspect of this article, is the accusation that I, throughout my candidacy for the position of General Secretary was present at Executive Council meetings when the Executive Council were discussing the election results. I confirm with honour I withdrew on each occasion from the meeting of the Executive Council and with honour and integrity I emphasise I will continue to withdraw from meetings of the Executive Council whenever this issue is the subject of discussion.

Islington House, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Greece and Nato

From M. Dragoumis, Press Counsellor, the Greek embassy

Claudia Wright (NS 27th February) claims to have proved not only that 'there are nuclear weapons in storage on Greek soil' but also that 'in 1977 the Greek government was lying about the terms it had negotiated for control of its bases.'

On the first count, it must be pointed out that the policy of the Greek government has been neither to confirm nor to deny the existence of nuclear weapons in Greece, since to do so either would be harmful to Greece's national security.

On the second charge Ms. Wright has produced no proof at all. Even assuming the authenticity of the document she reproduces and the presence of so-called 'nuclear custodial units' in Greece, all that logically follows from her text is that had the 1977 agreements been ratified and implemented these units would have retained their previous status. It does not at all follow that this status was unsatisfactory to Greece.

I should like to add that the day after this article appeared, the Government spokesman in Athens made it clear that, while all responsible governments keep some of their defence arrangements secret, none of the Greek-American agreements concluded in the past has ever deprived Greece of control of the allied weapons systems on her territory. He went on to emphasise that in the negotiations currently under way with the USA, the Greek government has adopted three positions on which it will not yield, namely that the bases in Greece are Greek and will have Greek commanders; that they are to serve the purposes of NATO exclusively; and that there will be no secret texts.

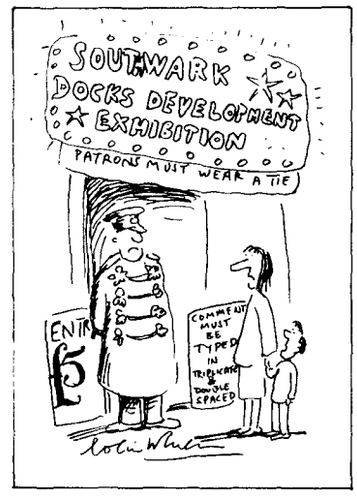
1a Holland Park, London W11

Down the Docks

From Pete Keal, Secretary, Southwark Docklands Campaign.

I really must respond to Cllr John O'Grady's letter about the Southwark Site (*NS* 27 February 1981).

John O'Grady maintains that Southwark 'undertook one of the largest consultation exercises ever undertaken in Britain'. This is really a bit hard to swallow. The only consultation has been two exhibitions — the first lasting two weeks and the second ten days. Of the 2,000 people who Councillor O'Grady claims visited the latter exhibition, only 149 people sent comments to the council and a substantial number of those neither lived nor worked in Southwark Site, so only a small proportion of local residents commented to the council.



Visitors to the exhibitions were treated to seductive plans, pictures and models of the various schemes and it is easy to respond to the visuals by saying 'that looks nice'. However, the substance of the proposals rests in thick reports which most exhibition goers did not have time to plough through. Had they done, the problems would have become evident — doubtful viability; the damaging effects on existing shopping centres; enormous traffic generation.

As far as O'Grady's claims that the scheme will bring thousands of jobs to South London and millions of pounds in rate income are concerned, this can only be believed when it is seen. A number of organisations are calling for a public inquiry into the Lysander plans including ourselves. Southwark Council's Director of Development has been quoted in the local paper (*South London Press*, 6 February) resisting this idea: 'As there are a number of companies involved, they are not going to wait for a public inquiry to finish. They are going to take their money and interest somewhere else'. If Southwark Council officers believe that the Lysander scheme will not be able to withstand the scrutiny of the planning process, then O'Grady's optimism is built on foundations laid in sand!

190 Southwark Park Road, Rotherhithe, SE16.

CEGB on heat

From J. K. Wright, Generation Studies Engineer, CEGB

I should like to assure Brian Deer that there is no lack of enthusiasm within the CEGB about supplying heat from CHP plant, and that contrary to his implication, it is the DH (District heating) which is the key to progress. It is a platititude to remark that there is no use in producing if there is no market for the product, but that is the essence of the CHP/DH problem as it has manifested itself for many years. We need customers who are prepared to install and operate large district heating schemes. CHP is useless without DH. We hope, as a result of the Government-led search for 'lead cities' now in progress and the apparent enthusiasm of local authorities, that suitable district heating loads will emerge.

Mr Deer says that the CEGB is 'closing down inner-city power stations most suitable for district heating schemes'. Whilst it is true that some of these power stations are in strategic locations, it must be recognised that the plant involved is already old and we would not see it as a basis for a reliable long-term heat supply. If it is clear that the heat loads are going to develop, we would prefer to supply the heat from modern, reliable equipment, possibly built on the site of one of the power stations that are being closed.

20 Newgate Street, London EC1

King Juan's pawns

From Simon Dally

I have followed your coverage of King Juan Carlos of Spain and the attempted coup with great interest. Beyond doubt your most penetrating comment to date is the photograph in last week's issue of His Majesty playing chess.

His (invisible) opponent appears to have opened with a somewhat feeble gambit, moving the king's knight to the extreme flank instead of to the centre. Unfortunately for the king, however, he is frittering away his chances with an irrelevant pawn move on the rook file when he should be consolidating in the centre and deploying his forces.

The situation is further confused by the fact that both players have begun the same with their kings and queens on the wrong squares, thereby rendering ambiguous such concepts as 'king's side'.

It is a great pity that your excellent chess correspondent was not invited to analyse how the game is likely to proceed from this position: I feel sure that he would have been able to describe the complexities rather better than Mr Jeremy Bennett.

85 Linden Gdns, London W2

NS and COHSE

On 30 January the NS ran a story (*Life's not so cosy in the suburbs*) about negotiations by APEX aimed at securing the right to represent staff employed by another union, COHSE. The story suggested that the COHSE leadership had taken a highly repressive line towards the establishment of APEX representation. In particular, the headline and text drew comparisons between COHSE's behaviour and that of Grunwick.

On the record, the NS has not been reluctant to tangle with the established leadership of unions, and persist in the matter when we think we're right. (NATSOPA, the AUEW and more recently, the Boilermakers, are all cases in point.) In this case, however, we think we were wrong.

COHSE's leadership may have made mistakes — but not ones commensurate with the level of criticism in the article, and certainly not ones deserving of public comparison with Grunwick. We should like to express our sincere regrets to COHSE. The writer of the article, Mr Tim Gopsill, continues to believe in the accuracy and fairness of his story. That is his right, of course — and he is in no way associated with this statement. The error we acknowledged is ours, not his.

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SPRING BOOKS

Ken Worpole on five books which rediscover the varied, experimental history of British working-class movements

New meat, old forks

IN 1839, in the face of rising unemployment in the building trade, the Newcastle lodge of the Operative Society of Masons proposed that their union should directly undertake public building contracts as an answer to unemployment. Their critics scorned such ridiculous proposals which were 'about a century too soon'. One hundred and forty years later we still, politically, cannot grasp anything so simple. But then, as Brecht said, it is the simple things which are so difficult to achieve. These five recent books on 19th- and 20th-century social history all seek to disentangle the complex relationships between 'work' and 'politics' (a capitalist separation of categories *in extremis)* in working-class communities. All grapple with the dynamic way in which changing modes of industrial production engendered new forms of working-class politics and culture. In a period in which modes of production are once again in a process of rapid change, we can expect similar ruptures in the political and cultural process as people try again to bring the social process back under their own control.

School text-book historians, and crude marxists, continue to portray history as an uncomplicated succession of new stages of development following in turn, rather like the scenes in the village pageant in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts:* here on stage is Mr Oak the carpenter representing the era of artisanal production, now moving downstage left to be supplanted by Mrs Calico with a sewing machine representing the age of mass industrial production. What actually happened of course in the 19th century — and continues to this very day — is spectacularly uneven development in both time and place. This unevenness was directly responsible for the 'tramping system' of itinerant skilled workers in the 19th century which R. A. Leeson's marvellously readable book (now in paperback) describes. It was because different towns and different regions had strong local economies that, if unemployment arose in a particular trade in a particular town, craftsmen (and very occasionally women) in that trade would be advised by their union to seek work elsewhere, where prospects might be better. Unemployed ironmoulders were required by their union to 'walk fairly', a tramping journey calling on some 50 towns with two crossings of the Irish Sea, before they were allowed to return to their home town to claim on the union's unemployment fund.

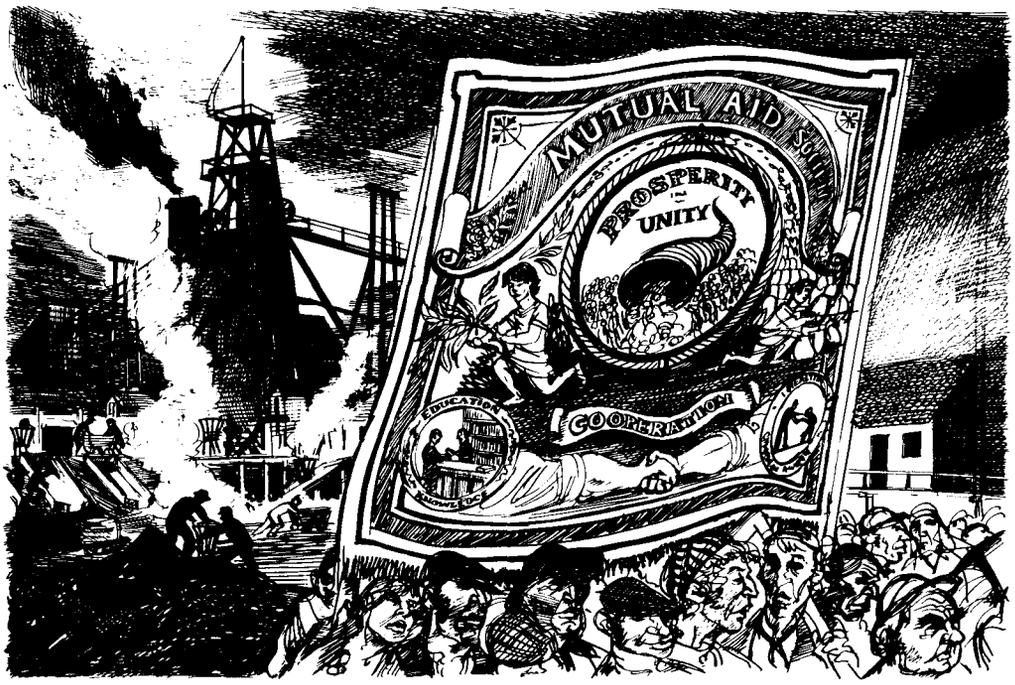
This uneven pace of industrialisation is also at the heart of Patrick Joyce's *Work, Society and Politics,* an impressive and convincing study of working-class life in the Lancashire cotton towns in the second half of the 19th century. Here the new powerful family dynasties of factory owners came to dominate the lives of their employees and their families more or less completely. The paternalist factory regimes not only provided the one source of employment for every family member, they also supplied the housing, the schools, the churches, the shops, the pubs and the clubs. These company towns often developed, it seems, into highly conservative and deferential working-class communities. Workplace trade-unionism had only a limited success in counteracting such paternalism. Yet in neighbouring West Riding, where artisanal forms of production survived for much longer, so did the old Chartist ideals and a much more obdurate class antagonistic politics.

In Lancashire the mould of deference was broken in the last quarter of the 19th century by two forces: one economic, the other more ideological. The growth of women's trade-unionism brought new political issues on to the agenda at work and at home. The spread of secularist and rationalist ideas also unsettled received ideas concerning the common purposes of the Masters, the Men, and their common Maker. In the wake of secularism came a new wave of socialist and working-class self-help organisations, the co-ops, the friendly societies which perceived the economic and the social as indivisible: thus the re-discovery of the politics of class.

Similar developments are observed in John Benson's *British Coalminers in the Ninetenth Century,* where he notes that in the Durham and Northumberland coalfields in the 1870s, class resistance at the point of production had to be supplemented by resistance on a wider level. Black-listed miners (the Derek Robinsons of yesterday) were obliged to set up little shops which became alternatives to the coal companies' 'Tommy' shops. Ideas of self-organisation in other spheres of life developed apace. 'The coming of the co-op often marked a village's arrival as an established community,' writes Benson. From such beginnings flowed that great wave of working-class self-organisation in the mining communities of North East England and South Wales, as in most other parts of the country: the Miners' Lodges and Institutes, the libraries, the working-men's clubs, the choirs, the bands, the co-operative shops, the mutual insurance schemes, the women's guilds, the Socialist Sunday Schools, the sporting clubs and organisations and, of course, the various branches of the different socialist organisations.

FROM SUCH origins in the late 1880s and 1890s many single industry villages, particularly mining villages, developed in the early decades of this century into tiny redoubts of militant political belief: 'Little Moscows' they were labelled. Stuart MacIntyre's book is an account of three such villages, of their separate histories, developments and common political formations at their high point in the 1930s. Such strong socialist local cultures were often centred initially around a building: in Lumphinnans (in Fife) the 'Goth', a co-op set up by a Swedish philanthropic movement; in the Vale of Leven (again in Fife), a mining village of 2,500 inhabitants managed to sustain its own political bookshop which sold 400 copies of a weekly communist newspaper. And of course the Rhondda villages all had their Institutes & Libraries whose powerful agency has been so well documented recently by the South Wales Miners' Library project in Swansea. Stuart MacIntyre seeks to understand the political dynamics of such expressive and strongly rooted communist 'counter-communities'. Activists embraced the 'religion of socialism' with fervour. History was on their side and moving inevitably towards the triumph of international communism, on the other side of which would be found the perfect classless society. One Lumphinnans miner, an anarchist named Lawrence Storione, ceaselessly active for the cause, named four of his children Germinal, Armonie, Libertie and Autonomie.

Such intensely active political traditions not



Travelling Brothers by R. A. LEESON *Paladin/ Granada* £2.50

Work, Society & Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England by PATRICK JOYCE *Harvester* £24

British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History by JOHN BENSON *Gill & Macmillan* £15

Little Moscows: Communism and Working Class Militancy in Inter-war Britain by STUART MACINTYRE *Croom Helm* £11.95

The Railway Workers 1840-1970 by FRANK MCKENNA *Faber* £10

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only built their own institutions, they also struggled to gain control of the enemy's. In Mardy, South Wales, a leading Communist managed to become a local magistrate. Faced with a case of wife-beating, sadly too common, he sentenced the husband to attend a May Day demonstration and told him to pay particular attention to the speeches where he would learn the real reason why the material conditions of the miners were so poor. MacIntyre concentrates on three particular 'Little Moscows', although he does mention others, all industrial communities. It is a pity there is no reference to the Norfolk village of Burston which sustained in quite different conditions a similar counter-community based on a school strike in 1911 and the building by the villagers of their own school which they supported outside the state system for a number of years.

Where working-class politics was not able to seize control of some of the larger 'spaces' of the civic realm, in the workplace people continued to struggle to make for themselves smaller areas of their own autonomy. In his study, *The Railway Workers,* Frank McKenna describes in great detail the origins and traditions of the railway workers' 'bailiewicks', sacrosanct spaces in which railwaymen would brook no un-negotiated interference: nobody was allowed to step up into the engine-man's engine, or into the signalman's box, or inside the shunter's yard, no matter what their status, without the express invitation of the worker concerned. Such working traditions created their own languages and cultures which still largely remained unknown and ignored beyond their setting. McKenna, himself a railway worker for some 20 years, is one of the new school of worker-historians encouraged and supported by the now widely influential History Workshop movement which started at Ruskin College, and which has contributed so much to the historiographical revolution of the past two decades. 'The language of the bailiewick is not,' he writes, 'a language of low descent, but a working organic language which crackles with wit and social criticism.' The last chapter of the book consists of an important essay on the nature of working-class language which, together with a formidable glossary of railway language, contributes much to our still impoverished understanding of the complexities of working-class culture.

ALL FIVE books are to be unreservedly recommended, perhaps most of all because of the way in which they contribute to one of the most pressing issues of contemporary politics: the sense in which we have to understand both the continuity and discontinuity of historical experience. We learn from them exactly how connected are the modes of material production to the ways in which political and cultural ideas are developed. For though we may be able to *dream* about the possibility of living in societies completely different from those in which we have little choice but to live, we have to realise that we can only *imagine* the good society as something very much based on the material conditions and relationships of production we know at present. Therefore, as Leeson and Joyce show, for the early 19th-century radical artisan the political ideal was a commonwealth of free producers. In the subsequent struggle for control over the labour process at the height of the factory system the new politics became that of factory syndicalism. And then in our era, with the increasing and massive power of the state over our lives, socialist politics has

Oxford University Press

Abroad
British Literary Traveling between the Wars
Paul Fussell

Abroad is an elegy for the lost art of genuine travel, and a celebration of British writers who, in their travel books, memorialized the last age of real travel: among them Graham Greene, D.H. Lawrence, Norman Douglas, Evelyn Waugh, and Robert Byron.
Illustrated £8.95

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Trees of the World
Edited by Bayard Hora

This attractive book, with 85 colour paintings and 280 colour photographs, describes the form, structure, growth, and ecology of trees and forests, and their uses. It surveys the major genera of trees of the world, concentrating on those that are grown commercially or for ornament in the temperate regions as well as covering the indigenous trees of the tropics. £12.50 *26 March*

Oxford American Dictionary

Mark Twain remarked that the English language is no longer the King's English, but a corporation in which the United States owns a great many shares. This is the first dictionary of American English to join the Oxford dictionary family.
£9.95 *26 March*

A Thames Companion
Mari Prichard and Humphrey Carpenter

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Walter Allen

The Short Story in English aims to isolate the essential qualities of the modern short story, showing how it differs from and what it has in common with the older form. Walter Allen deals with the rise and development of the genre in England and the United States, and with its most eminent practitioners, past and present.
£9.50 *26 March*

Towards the Mountain
Alan Paton

By the author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*: 'An autobiography to restore faith in human qualities; a life so well-lived it is meaningful even for those remote from the South African experience, a unique writer whose passion, honesty, and stern humour *are* his style.' *Nadine Gordimer.*
Illustrated £12.50

Our Elders
J.A. Muir Gray and Gordon Wilcock

One person in six in the United Kingdom is now over 65. As the numbers of old, inactive, and disabled people increase, the already overstretched services devoted to their care will be further challenged. This book has been written in order to make people more aware of the special physical, social, and legal needs of the elderly. £8.50
Oxford Paperbacks £4.50

Coronary Heart Disease: The Facts
John Parsons Shillingford

Coronary heart disease causes between a third and half of all deaths in prosperous countries. This book, designed for sufferers and their families, and for health professionals, gives the present knowledge about risk factors, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and life style after a heart attack. £4.95

The Science of Human Progress
Robin Holliday

The methods of molecular biology have produced a revolution in science in the last twenty-five years. The author suggests that eventually the nervous systems of higher organisms and the structure and function of the human brain will be understood, with far-reaching implications for society in general. £6.95

Paved with Good Intentions
The American Experience and Iran
Barry Rubin

This book chronicles American foreign policy in Iran from before the first days of the Pahlavi dynasty, throwing light on much behind-the-scenes dealing and on many of the central characters in a modern tragedy which threatens the world's stability. £8.95

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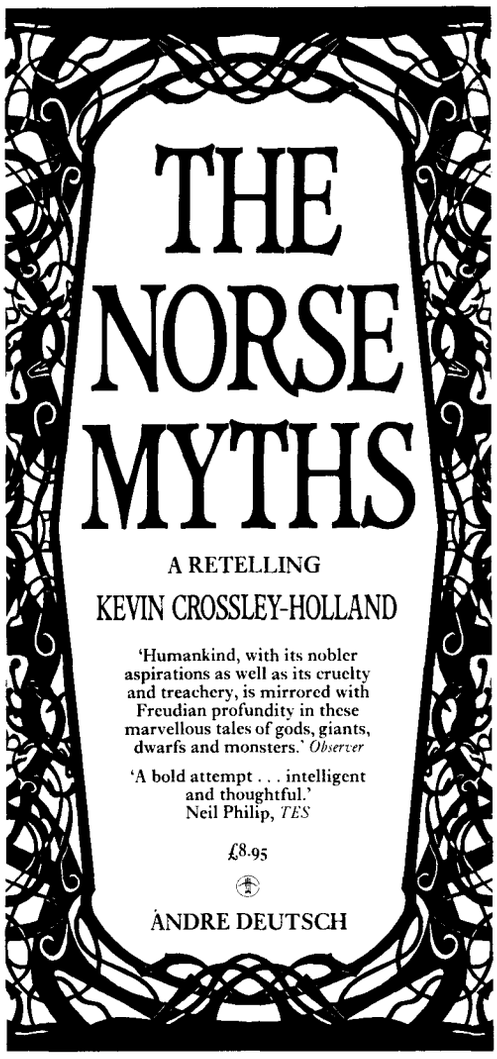
THE
NORSE
MYTHS
A RETELLING
KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND
'Humankind, with its nobler aspirations as well as its cruelty and treachery, is mirrored with Freudian profundity in these marvellous tales of gods, giants, dwarfs and monsters.' Observer
'A bold attempt . . . intelligent and thoughtful.'
Neil Philip, TES
£8·95
ANDRE DEUTSCH

become pre-occupied with the problem of capturing the state. We now have to move beyond that premise.

We still live in an era of uneven development, again in both time and place. A programme for popular and self-managing socialism will be quite different in a contemporary agricultural village from that needed to come to terms with the economic and cultural issues of the multi-racial areas of the large cities. And as, once again, technological development brings with it intense intellectual labour for very small numbers of people, it also brings a return to domestic handwork, the breaking down of sites of mass heavy industrial production, and new possibliities for different social relations around material and cultural production.

Retaining in one's mind simultaneously two contradictory senses of history — of both change and continuity — is difficult but has to be done. We have to think when we think historically of the co-existence of both proximity and distance, of gain and loss, of possibility but also of retreat and failure. Brecht, good dialectician that he was, captured this problem in 'New Ages':

> A new age does not begin all of a sudden.
> My grandfather was already living in the new age.
> My grandson will probably still be living in the old one.
>
> The new meat is eaten with the old forks.
>
> From new transmitters came the old stupidities.
> Wisdom was passed from mouth to mouth.

Or carried from one generation to the next by such exemplary historical studies as these. □

WALTER LIPPMANN and the American Century

RONALD STEEL

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POETRY

Andrew Motion

'Remembering'

A German Requiem by JAMES FENTON *The Salamander Press, 73 Morningside Park, Edinburgh EH10 5EZ* £1.50 (post free)
Unplayed Music by CAROL RUMENS *Secker* £4.50
Close Relatives by VICKI FEAVER *Secker* £4.50
Ways of Light by RICHARD EBERHART *Oxford* £5.95

Why doesn't James Fenton write more poetry? Since *Terminal Moraine* came out in 1972 he's published only a pamphlet of poems, *A Vacant Possession* (1978), and a handful of others in magazines. Now that one of these uncollected pieces has been revised and published separately — it was originally called 'Elegy' — it has a considerable scarcity value. Saying so, of course, presupposes that Fenton is a poet of especial interest, and those who object to the rate of his poetic production imply this compliment. But their objection is unreasonable. There's invariably a strictly limited amount that a poet can do to quicken creativity. And it's more rewarding in Fenton's case, anyway, to view the whole matter from a different angle, and point out that even his relatively few poems direct our attention to what they don't or can't say. Sometimes, as in 'A Vacant Possession' itself, the very ingenuity of his narrative forces us to wonder why, having created so much incident, he should stop where he does. What's being excluded? At other times, he reminds us that even the most scrupulous respect for the whole truth of a story cannot prevent narrative from embellishing or neglecting.

A German Requiem is Fenton's most deliberate and theoretical consideration of these issues. It's also one of his most obscure, linguistically restrained poems — as if the 'not-said' with which it is preoccupied had intimidated the resources of the 'said' that it needs in order to exist. The nine short sections refer to post-war Germany, and to the comforts and deceptions of Remembrance. But the actions they describe are archetypal as well as realistic. Grieving survivors represent a city of the living, the dead are their own separate society, and never the twain shall meet. If they communicate at all it is only ironically — as the poem's central and most potent image indicates:

> But when so many had died, so many and at such speed,
> There were no cities waiting for the victims.
> They unscrewed the name-plates from the shattered doorways
> And carried them away with the coffins.

Naturalistic description is never allowed a free run in the poem; it is always checked by philosophical speculations. Contained in the references to Remembrance, and frequently breaking up its observances, are the issues of the not-said which Fenton crystallises in his choice of an epigraph from *Leviathan*. 'Imagination and Memory', he quotes Hobbes as saying, 'are but one thing.' What this means in his poetic practice is an admission that 'remembering' history often involves cultivating a good deal of self-protecting forgetfulness. It also leads him to emphasise that the act of imagination he performs in creating the poem has a similar tendency to misrepresent reality. The truth of history is often atrocious and always elusive — no wonder people want to forget:

> It is not what he wants to know.
> It is what he wants not to know.
> It is not what they say.
> It is what they do not say.

Fenton recalls the temptations of oblivion repeatedly, but, as this extract suggests, there are ambiguities in his attitude which prevent him from condoning forgetfulness altogether. *A German Requiem* is a deeply compassionate, as well as a highly intelligent poem, and Fenton always keeps his knowledge that the past has lessons for the present in balance with his sense of 'How comforting it is, once or twice a year,/To get together and forget the old times'.

CAROL RUMENS's poems occupy a more familiar world, and proceed in a much more orthodox manner. Characteristically, they address themselves to 'what's provincial, gardened, small, enduring', and admonish or celebrate it with elegant, controlled formality. And they show a good deal of Larkin's influence:

> We chug towards our own front door
> anxiously, seeing as if for the first time
> how tight the plot that locks us in,
> how small our parts, how unchosen.

If this were all that *Unplayed Music* had to offer, its rewards would be correspondingly modest. But among the rather old-fashioned reports from suburbia are poems which express a more peculiar, arresting cast of mind. Several of these are created by the simple fidelity of her observations; when she resists the temptation to interrupt looking with judging, her intentness makes the familiar strange. This is particularly evident in the large number of poems which

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make some reference to children. Being adult means being sad, or satirically defensive, and therefore jeopardises the chances of seeing with the clarity that children are commonly supposed to possess. When Rumens introduces them into her poems, their appearance invariably stimulates an impressive, simple precision. And when she is most strongly aware of herself as a child, in the elegy 'December Walk', the result is intensely poignant:

He was somebody once,
but sickened, and lost
the weight of himself.
He forgot our names
and wandered for years,
words melting off his back
like snowflakes.

Simplicity is Vicki Feaver's strongest card and throughout *Close Relatives*, her first collection, she writes with strikingly confident lyric grace. The result reads like a kind of stream-lined Hugo Williams — particularly since she shares many of Williams's preoccupations: loss, disappointment, failure and hopelessness:

Begin now, you told yourself,
and like a wave the day
would carry you with it.
But you sat there not moving —
not even sure for how long —
until you heard birds cheeping
and the dull thunder of a plane
and you knew it was already too late.

There are obvious disadvantages in this style — the most serious being that the cultivation of simplicity seems merely the avoidance of complexity. Vicki Feaver isn't always able to escape this danger; read in bulk, her poems can't help conveying a somewhat axiomatic pessimism. Children, relationships, and domestic life are all tenderly observed, but are all thwarted by the prospect or likelihood of unsuccess. The inevitability of her disappointments suggests that she knows her poetic world too well to discover many surprises.

Richard Eberhart is less predictable, but the achievements this might permit are almost always withheld by his pomposity. Whether he's tackling communion-with-nature, death, love, or poetry itself, his talent is always a prey to flabby generalisations and abstractions. The result is a far cry from virtues he appreciates in principle:

Words must be erect, tensile, strong
To put into the realm of reality
Unreality, invisibilities, subtleties
That ravish the senses and the mind.

Eberhart has spent much of his creative life on university campuses, and is apt to feel himself obliged to teach as he writes. He drops other writers' names and cadences with spectacular frequency, but rather than dignifying his own creations, their effect is usually to provoke his most powerful gusts of hot air. The metaphysicals lead to 'What stirs imagination is the impossibility/Of honesty because of complexity'; Hopkins is flatly commended — 'And there is no poet today so exacting as Hopkins'; and Frost becomes a banal boast — 'There is something in me to test nature'. □

Among this week's contributors:

KEN WORPOLE recently published, with Barry Burke, a study of working-class politics and culture in Hackney 1879-1900, *Hackney Propaganda*. He is an associate editor of *History Workshop Journal*.

ANGELINE GOREAU is the author of *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn*.

Angeline Goreau on new tax rulings which have made US publishers turn thousands of books into toilet-rolls

Literature as spare parts

IN THE past few months, an undetermined number of books came to an untimely end. Their demise was attributable to unnatural causes: covers were ripped off, glue dissolved, and internal printed matter trucked to industrial suburbs. Here, the texts were dumped into enormous vats of chemicals, which removed the words from the page, liquified, and translated the resulting pulp into toilet paper. The number of novels, scholarly treatises and other works that have lately been subjected to this process has been calculated in millions.

Behind this unexpected boon to the toilet paper industry lies a dispute over spare parts. In January 1979, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Internal Revenue Service in a case brought against Thor Power Tool Company, disallowing the traditional accounting practice of 'writing down' the value of inventory for tax purposes. By assigning a depreciating value to stock in the warehouse, companies were able to reduce their profits on paper and thereby reduce taxes. Thor, the court decision stated, could not claim a lesser value for spare parts maintained in inventory unless they were actually sold at that price or destroyed.

Publishers didn't pay much attention to Thor's difficulties until last February, when the IRS ruled that the Supreme Court decision would be applied to every sort of business, to literary stock as well as machineware. Furthermore, the new rules were made retrospective to 1979. Manufacturers of books would either have to come up with extra taxes, or get rid of goods. Many publishers, faced with a staggering IRS bill, had no choice but to take the second course of action; most publishers could little afford a severe drain on an already ebbing cash flow.

The most profitable means of disposing of books is remaindering, selling them off at a much lower price, usually below the cost of production. This is possible, however, only in the case of books which have some sort of general appeal — more obscure literature, medical and scientific books, or scholarly works cannot be sold to remainder outlets. These are the books that become fodder. By the autumn of 1980, authors began to receive notices in the mail informing them that their books were going out of print because of the Thor decision. Publishing houses known for their commitment to keeping works in print began increasing the number of books remaindered: Viking-Penguin by 30 per cent, Farrar, Straus and Giroux by 30 per cent, and Harper and Row by much more. 'Everybody's dumping like crazy,' Roger Straus, of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, told the *New York Times* in October.

Straus, president of one of the few established houses that has resisted acquisition by corporate interests, points out that it is the works of literary or artistic merit that may need time to find an audience which will suffer most, particularly the first novel:

Unfortunately, publishers are going to look even more severely at those books they realise will

continued on p.22

This man, on 21 September 1976, blew up these people in the streets of Washington D.C.

This was the day international terrorism exploded on American soil

The victims were former Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier and Letelier's young colleague, Ronni Moffitt.

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Selected spring and summer books

The books listed below are a selection from those which the publishers hope to issue between now and the end of September. Some prices are provisional, some are not yet known. Titles already announced are not included.

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LUCIANO BELLOSI **Giotto** *Constable* £5.50
DAVID BINDMAN **Hogarth** *Thames & Hudson* £5.95 & £2.95
MARTIN BUTLIN **The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake** *Yale University Press* £100 2-vol set
FRANCOISE DE FRANCLIEU (Ed.) **Le Corbusier Sketchbooks Vol 1 1914-1948** *Thames & Hudson* £50
DENYS HAYNES **Greek Art and the Idea of Freedom** *Thames & Hudson* £6.95
RICHARD & SAMUEL REDGRAVE **A Century of British Painters** *Phaidon* £7.95
JOHN RUSSELL **The Meanings of Modern Art** *Thames & Hudson* £16
HENRI STIERLIN **The Art of the Maya: From the Olmecs to the Maya/Toltecs** *Skira/Macmillan* £25
ROBERTO TASSI **Sutherland: The Wartime Drawings** *Sotheby Parke Bernet* £14.95
WILLEM ULDE **Van Gogh** *Phaidon* £9.95 & £6.95

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continued from p. 19

not have immediate commercial appeal. If someone has to work backward from a profit and loss statement, it will be hard to justify the publication of such books. It will have a devastating effect on culture.

In the past, publishers built up and maintained a backlist of titles which sold over a period of time and provided a good deal of the capital needed to invest in signing up new books. A house invested in a writer's career, perhaps publishing a few books with little hope of return while a reputation established itself. Over the years, risks like William Faulkner or T.S. Eliot, both selling few copies initially, paid off handsomely in the long run. *Thor* is the last straw in a series of economic changes that have made this kind of publishing increasingly a thing of the past. In the last 20 years, most of the major publishing houses have been bought up by conglomerates like RCA or CBS. The new corporate owners have demanded higher profit-margins and a quick return on capital invested, which can be best supplied by best-sellers. Inflation and the high price of interest make it more and more of a losing proposition to depend on slow returns and slender profits. At the same time, the cost of warehousing and of reprinting small quantities of books has gone up astonishingly. This mix of circumstances forces even publishers with impressive backlists to cut back the number of books they keep in print: the 60 per cent of sales they represented two decades ago has shrunk to half that.

THE AUTHOR'S Guild, PEN, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Association of American Publishers, and other organisations are asking the US Congress to exempt publishing from the Thor decision. Books are repositories of ideas, they argue, and ought not to be accorded the same treatment as widgets or gadgets or cars. Economic censorship effectively imposed by the new ruling constitutes a threat to an 'uninhibited marketplace of ideas' protected by the First Amendment. Finally, book publishing belongs to a special and perhaps unique economic category: no other industry, in the normal course of business, is required consistently to introduce such a large number of new products. As it is impossible to carry out market research for each one, sales are difficult to predict accurately and the ability to keep excess print orders in the warehouse without financial penalty is a necessary margin of error in such an operation. The IRS gains nothing by forcing publishers to dispose of inventory, since, if books are allowed to remain in print, they may eventually be sold, producing taxable income.

Quite beyond the effect on publishing, however, the Thor decision will have a much larger impact on society as a whole. In the years after the war, when corporate planners were thinking up new ways to get Americans to consume more and faster, the idea of planned obsolescence provided a neat solution to the prospect of market saturation. This and other developments have made it difficult already to get a failing appliance repaired: there are fewer people in the business of doing so, and fewer companies find it profitable to keep the parts on hand for models no longer being produced.

Recognising that natural resources have a finite limit is difficult for a country with America's frontier heritage, but the truth is that we can no longer afford to throw away spare parts any more than we can afford to consign culture or research to the dustbin. □

Ian Miles

New maps for old

The State of the World Atlas by MICHAEL KIDRON and RONALD SEGAL *Heinemann* £9.50 *Pan* £5.95

This atlas shows, as perhaps no other has done before, that cartography is a job that cannot be politically neutral. There has, of course, often been controversy over national boundaries, with opposing governments denouncing each other's maps — for example Guatemala and Belize, India and Pakistan. But this book moves beyond specific complaints of that sort; instead, it is a clear challenge to the whole world-view expressed in previous political and economic atlases.

The authors have assembled an informative collection of maps, covering a wide range of issues: war and armaments, natural resources and nuclear power, industrial and financial relations between states, the ideological and repressive state apparatus, labour force data, inequalities, and more. Over 130 pages of full-colour maps are flanked by a rather insubstantial introduction and around 30 pages of somewhat more meaty notes.

Most of the maps are stunningly presented, but there are more than a handful where the choice of colours leaves something to be desired. One map, labelled 'exploitation' but actually referring only to manufacturing workers *in toto* (thus aggregating managers together with shopfloor workers) colours all countries the same muddy grey, and indicates national differences only by assigning each country a fist of one of five sizes. Perhaps the authors' unhappiness with the data here means that they're not too eager for ready conclusions to be drawn from it. The map seems to indicate that the level of exploitation is lower in rich countries, but Michael Barrett Brown's book *The Economics of Imperialism* (Penguin 1974) presents data showing that, conversely, manufacturing productivity differentials between rich and poor countries are higher than wage differentials.

This is only one of a number of maps which will be contentious. The Right, of course, will be enraged to find Britain listed as one of the countries where torture was 'widely used and officially condoned' (1977-79) — and perhaps there are limits to the usefulness of a method that puts Britain and Chile in the same class on this issue, while the USA (prime exporter of torture technology) and the Central African Republic have clean hands. Some people in the nuclear disarmament movement may be unhappy with maps which at first glance appear to put Nato and the Warsaw Pact into very much the same league in terms of nuclear weapons. China's air power appears to be comparable to that of the Soviet Union; it is only in the end-notes that its serious obsolescence is conceded.

These data on militarism provide a clear example of the need to read the small print before taking these maps — any map — at face value. The atlas would also have benefited from more complete bibliographic information. And in any project of this sort there are bound to be minor errors. For instance Map 32 (political refugees) seems to indicate that the UK received no refugees during 1972-79, although one of the newspaper sources this map drawn on puts the figure in the tens of thousands. The colour for 'poor market economies' in the key of Map 43 is different from that on the map itself. There is also one downright ridiculous illustration, in which world unemployment levels are projected to the year 2150!

Neither these slips, not the misleading comparisons involved in some other maps, offset the considerable value of this atlas. It does

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more than highlight important data. It also tells its own story, a story about the development and proliferation of the state. The state, the introduction argues, has come to exhaust its constructive role, now featuring mainly as a militaristic, expansionist, wasteful, repressive body. However, the way in which non-capitalist and dependent states are moulded within a capitalist world-system is not apparent from the maps. We are shown states with varying levels of employment, wealth and repression. But the Soviet and Chinese states, for example, are essentially states like any other, except that Marxism-Leninism is the official religion. Despite a few brave attempts, too, the nature of international linkage tends to take a back seat: despite the authors' intentions, it would be fairly easy for the reader to assume that virtues (less inequality, lower murder rate and so forth) are concentrated together with national wealth.

These are more than quibbles. Although an alternative to the world-view of other atlases is embodied here, it is not necessarily one which can be accepted without reservation. What can be welcomed, however, is the fine presentation of a mass of vital information that was previously scattered in a host of forbidding statistical yearbooks. It will deservedly find a place on a large number of bookshelves. □

Stephen Brook

Travelling light

Abroad by PAUL FUSSELL *Oxford* £8.95

Why travel? Reasons are plentiful: escape from drab, inclement England, the exercise of curiosity, the pursuit of exotic and erotic adventure, the indulgence of freedom, and so forth. Between the wars the desire to travel could be easily assuaged: travel as a mode of inquiry was still distinct from tourism, and the exchange rate made travel cheap.

Therefore, and also as a direct result of liberation from wartime restrictions, most writers of consequence of that time both travelled and wrote about their journeyings. Some of these writers, notably Robert Byron and Norman Douglas, remain best known for their travel books; but even Joyce and Eliot, who could hardly be described as travel writers, exhibited a remarkably strong sense of place. (Fussell illuminatingly remarks on 'The Waste Land' as a topographical poem.)

Paul Fussell, in this lucid and immensely enjoyable book, reclaims this large body of writing. Rather than attempt a comprehensive survey of the corpus, he allows his perceptions of the nature of travel writing and his reading of specific texts to spark against each other. The result is idiosyncratic but unfailingly stimulating. In his preface, Fussell writes that *Abroad* 'aspires at once to the condition of literary criticism, social and cultural history, and autobiography'. This explains both the book's distinctiveness and its occasional unsatisfactoriness.

Typical of the interaction between Fussell's fertility of mind and his critical acuity is the chapter on Waugh. He precedes it by noting that travel itself 'is an implicit quest for anomaly'. This is, as he shows, especially true of Waugh, whose comedy results largely from the disparity between his 'unquestioned understanding of the norm and an unapologetic loyalty to it' and the variations from the norm that he inevitably encounters as he explores a world which he considers unalterably alien. Fussell goes on to speculate about the literary categorisation of travel books and suggests links between them and fiction. Travel writing, which requires organisation and narrative and suppression of unwanted material, is not after all so remote from fiction, and Fussell comments on Waugh's awareness 'that to be refracted in language fact must be fictionalised'.

Like a Turkish bus, Fussell makes many stops. True to the informality announced in his preface, he likes to digress: on ship imagery in the 1920s, on touts, on the notion of frontier and its associations with menace, on sun-worship, on travelling companions — all rewarding excursions. *Abroad* is organised loosely, a touch lazily, in spite of the wealth of material Fussell has digested and the elegance with which he speculates on it. Perhaps this looseness can be attributed to Fussell's personal elegiac sense, for he sees travel as no longer a possibility; tourism and the packaged holiday have taken over, and even the would-be traveller is likely to be frustrated (though such travellers as Paul Theroux, V.S. Naipaul, Robyn Davidson and Geoffrey Moorhouse have in recent years countered Fussell's contention). There were few impediments to obstruct the self-confident British travellers of the 1920s — Byron and Douglas and the restless Lawrence — but by the end of the 1930s political and economic barriers to travel were growing. Unfavourable exchange rates and the spread of war across Europe put an end to most travel, and the genre dwindled into the self-consciousness of Auden's and Isherwood's joint travel writings, and into the war correspondent's memoir.

During the second world war a British Railways poster demanded: 'Is Your Journey Really Necessary?' That could serve as a final epigraph to this book, which traces with such flair and suggestiveness the final flowering of the genre.

Abroad is less compelling than Fussell's masterly *The Great War and Modern Memory*, but that is no slight. Travel is not, like war, about conflict and death, but about escape and curiosity and freedom and adventure, and writing about it calls for the very lightness of touch that Fussell possesses. He resurrects an unfashionable genre, but he does not make excessive claims for it. He has done more: entertainingly but judiciously, he informs us not only about an exhilarating period in the literature and culture of travel, but about the nature of travel itself. □

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FICTION

Gillian Wilce

Just imagine

The Sirian Experiments by DORIS LESSING *Cape* £6.95

The Roman Persuasion by BERNARD BERGONZI *Weidenfeld* £6.95

Housekeeping by MARILYNNE ROBINSON *Faber* £5.25

Rhine Journey by ANN SCHLEE *Macmillan* £5.95

The Love Child by EDITH OLIVIER *Virago* £2.50

The mental and imaginative processes of women figure largely in these novels, particularly those by women, and they are remarkably little concerned with the traditionally expected obsession, relationship to men. Ambien II, for instance, the thoroughly female narrator of *The Sirian Experiments,* is one of the Five who govern the Sirian interplanetary empire; her work is that of a conscientious state bureaucrat and her private journey is towards discovering what the universe is really like. The aeons of her life involved in the novel's time span are much occupied with the management of the recalcitrant planet Rohanda (known to the possibly-rival empire Canopus, whose agents are also active there, as Shikasta). The novel adopts one of those shifts in perception (Rohanda is, naturally, earth) which, by making the familiar unfamiliar, allows author and reader to 'wonder' (to use Ms Lessing's own word) anew about the conditions of human life.

In her preface, Doris Lessing asks critics of the previous two volumes of her *Canopus in Argos: Archives* who have taken her cosmology too seriously, 'Why is it that writers who by definition operate by the use of their imaginations, are given so little credit for it?' The answer in this case may be that, while imagination at its most potent addresses mind and emotion evenly, Ms Lessing's 'just supposing' appeals more directly to the intellect than to any other function. Of course, ideas are perfectly appropriate matter for novels. Of course, Doris Lessing is scarcely capable of writing anything which is not readable and thought-provoking. But the ideas here are perhaps too near the surface, too little assimilated. Aha, one thinks, there goes Atlantis, and that was the flood; and, oh dear, here comes a touch of the Van Dänikens, and this must be the promised discussion of the hold of group mentality over individual thinking.

The fictional thread which joins the ideas is Ambien II's long, slow struggle to understand how Canopus thinks and operates. But the potential dramatic tension of the difficult progress towards awareness is undercut by her too frequent, too early admissions that her thinking at the time was wrong. Nevertheless, Doris Lessing could be said to have done what she set out to do — 'to tell . . . a beguiling tale . . . to put questions, both to myself and to others; to explore ideas and sociological possibilities.'

Professor Bernard Bergonzi's first novel is completely different in form, being a straightforward narration of the reactions of an English Catholic family to events in the Thirties, but not dissimilar in its outcome. The reader's mind learns something about how it was that people of goodwill could, seeing their church under attack, support Franco's rebels, agonise over whether they should support Franco's rebels and become divided from each other over the issue. But the same reader's emotions will probably remain completely unengaged. It isn't just that Martin Tolleybeare, the main propagandist for Catholic support of the new right, is wholly unsympathetic, apparently empty of anything truly Christian, a pushover for the strong views of others on roughly the same side; it's also that the dialogue and development of the novel remain stiff, lacking inner momentum. The imaginative low point is an unduly stilted conversation between Martin and a German he has met in Spain:

> 'In recent years interesting political ideas and forms have appeared in Austria, and I would like to see them extending throughout the German world.'
>
> 'You refer to Dollfuss and his constitution? I greatly admired Dollfuss . . .'

The book is at its best, on the other hand, around the home life of Martin's uncle Wilfrid Cartwright. His three single daughters are divided very conveniently for the purpose of dinner-table conversation on politics, but it is in Wilfrid's family affections that one comes closest to understanding the Catholic persuasion.

ALREADY much praised, Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* is a strikingly imaginative first novel. It is permeated by the great lake under the hills beside the town of Fingerbone. The lake holds the bodies of previous inhabitants; narrator Ruthie's grandfather lies fathoms deep inside a train which ran off the long bridge and her mother is trapped down there in a car which she deliberately drove over the edge. The waters of the lake seep back into the cellars and fields and in winter snowdrifts lean their sodden weight against the flimsy houses.

Ruthie and her sister Lucille are minded first by their grandmother, then by two great-aunts and finally by their aunt Sylvie. Sylvie is a transient, briefly anchored in Fingerbone by the children, who still collects old newspapers and wears her boots in bed. As the children grow up, Lucille rejects the lakeside ways of childhood for conventional adolescence while Ruthie gradually succumbs altogether to the natural world and abandons the very idea of keeping a house.

The story is simple — few main players, no men of any import, no complex relationships; it presents a world and a child's dreamy consciousness of that world, in prose that demands slow, appreciative reading. And if I have made it sound in the least bit fey, that is wrong, too, because it is also wholly accurate and gently humorous.

Another first novel to be recommended is Ann Schlee's vignette of an English family holidaying on the Rhine in the mid-19th-century. The single sister and aunt, Charlotte's dormant emotions are re-activated by the sight of a man like another from the past. The turmoil that follows in her fantasy life is delicately balanced against an outside world of obtuse family, travelling acquaintance and the reverberations of distant political affairs. The power of the imagination in a lonely woman is also Edith Olivier's subject in *The Love Child,* first published in 1927. Virago continue to produce an amazingly consistent succession of worthwhile though previously neglected books, and this odd little tale of Agatha and the child Clarissa whom she creates out of her own head is no exception. Old-fashionedly formal in language, it is all the same a fantasy of spot-on psychological truth. □

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ARTS

Stephanie Jordan on the encouraging quality of the Ballet Rambert's recent season

New, joyful, sleek

Ballet Rambert's talented and recently acquired choreographer Richard Alston has provided the most exciting London dance event this year, kicking off the company's current Sadler's Wells season with his new *Rite of Spring*. Taking the opportunity to use all 19 dancers, this, his most ambitious project yet, demonstrates his satisfaction to be working with a large and relatively stable group. Moreover, the very presence of *Rite* in the programme suggests an historic link with the original (the founder Dame Marie Rambert assisted Nijinsky with

Sally Owen in Rite of Spring

the first choreography in 1913) and the company's confidence in Alston.

There are several clear references to the first version, not only in Alston's reinstatement of the Stravinsky/Roerich scenario 'Pictures of Pagan Russia', but also, as Alston admits, in the staging, clearly similar in style to Nijinska's recently seen *Les noces*. Alston uses its mass sculptural groupings — bodies piled up against each other, standing frieze-like or flat, embracing the ground — also the jagged bent-knee postures and flexed feet and nervous, skittering step patterns which find their way into the solo of the sacrificial Chosen One. Even the peasant costumes with the cross-garters recall photographs of the première, although Peter Mumford's hessian and rope setting is novel.

In one sense, the iconic nature of *Les noces* provides the key to Alston's response to Stravinsky's *Rite*. It is distinctive, unusual in its deliberate avoidance of the frenzy and attachment to the musical pulse that has marked so many other versions, by Nijinsky himself and, more recently, by Glen Tetley, Kenneth Macmillan and Pina Bausch. Alston rather seeks out the terrible power of quiet. His *Rite* is extremely controlled, distanced, with many stillnesses, moments of waiting or simple walking that allow the music to speak with clarity and independence.

Alston's *Rite* is usually intimate too, designed for small spaces, using Stravinsky's own piano duet arrangement, skilfully performed here by Nicholas Carr and Christopher Swithinbank. Some of the dance draws us close: the very telling, unhurried passage downstage when a rather Socratic Sage (played by Yair Vardi) encloses the head of each virgin in his hands; the long, long, supple, sensual phrases that recall Alston's other work. This kind of movement is finely set on the women in *Rite*, resulting in slippery, luscious intertwinings, as four women comfort one another when the curtain rises, later as the mystic circles of the virgins gradually draw the Sage across the space.

Alas, the continuity of this 33-minute piece gets lost at the halfway point. Part II has an unsatisfactory static centre during which the chosen virgin is immobilised in the clutches of the Sage; her final solo is also disappointing. While the company cowers motionless in the shadows, Sally Owen repeats the face-down, embrace-earth position that we have seen many times before, but the power of stillness has by then dried up. Admittedly, later, she dances splendidly, in explosive bursts that establish a closer relationship with the asymmetrical musical rhythms, eventually freeing herself into huge leaps that devour more and more space, but too late.

For all its meat and intelligence, despite the beauty of some of its parts, Alston's *Rite* isn't tough enough for its music and doesn't make a convincing whole. Control goes too far. But it is a formidable task and, with its literary thread, *Rite* represents a new departure for Alston, not an entirely happy one at first viewing but adventurous certainly, and sufficiently intriguing to make me want to return to it.

Not so with Cliff Keuter's new piece, *Figures of Wind*, that preceded *Rite* on the same programme. In front of an old-fashioned drop-cloth depicting the *menhirs* of Carnac in Brittany and, later, night (according to the programme note), the dance conjures up phantoms in a place of reunion, their aggression, playful antics, sorrow, group solidarity, structured into various male-female or mixed dances, all looking faintly primeval.

It is a fluent but very ordinary work and I am unable to see any justification for the baroque concertos that chortle in the background. Is it worth importing a West Coast American choreographer to make one inconsiderable work?

More thrills for Alston-watchers with *Rainbow Ripples*, a rich, convincing and happy work. Alston uses Charles Amirkhanian's *Just*, a word score in which he manipulates rhythmically and stereophonically the sequence 'Rainbow bandit chug bandit bomb', then his similar treatment of an amusing lecture on music appreciation entitled *Heavy Aspirations*, concluding with George Hamilton Green's rag, *Rainbow Ripples*.

The dance burgeons with ideas: darting foci, canons that spill out and wrap up into brief resolution, restless rhythmic configurations, phrases that acquire new endings, groups (two pairs of men and a trio of women) that come and go and overlap at high velocity. Sometimes the relationship between a dance phrase and the inflections and rhythms of the text is tight and generates certain unexpected points of clarity and humour: an indomitable weighty up-and-over with one leg at the words 'text sound' repeated at irregular intervals; little mincing jumps side to side on a rapid series of onoma-

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topoeia: 'clang, clash, clatter' etc. The bombardment of ideas continues almost until the end when things get cleaned up. The dancers bend into the musical pulse, into unison activity and finally all merge with the enlarged pose on David Buckland's backcloth.

Landscape, Alston's other London première, is very different, showing enthusiasm for English music and countryside. The simplicity of the costumes, the haunting meadow scenery with cumulus clouds and melancholy suggestion of elm trees (to the accompanying four-movement *Phantasy Quintet* of Vaughan Williams) are potent images which miraculously avoid being arch English rustic. The third sarabande movement is a tranquil, cleanlined *pas de deux* for Michael Clark and Lucy Bethune.

Rather like the pose in *Ripples,* there is a motto movement, a leaning back with a scissor-like opening of one arm up and the other down the body. Like *Ripples* too, the dance reaches unison with the motto by the end, but here in quiet apothesis to a serene piece.

CHRISTOPHER Bruce's work still features strongly in Rambert programmes, with *Black Angels* and *Cruel Garden* included again this season, as well as one première for students at the Rambert Academy and one, *Preludes and Song*, for the main company. Formerly Associate Director of Ballet Rambert, Bruce left to freelance in 1979. He is now listed as Associate Choreographer. *Preludes and Song* forms a touching if unexciting curtain-raiser to Rambert's second programme. Associating the spreading wings of soaring birds with his feelings about his own children growing up, Bruce has made a plotless work with a central pair, Lucy Burge and Yair Vardi, particularly moving, parental in relation to a group of 'fledgeling' dancers. It is expressed with a fine vocabulary, but the alternations of pair and group and the many unison and unvaried formations seem interminable.

It is good to see two older works by Antony Tudor back again. Some of *Judgment of Paris* (1938) is hilarious; but the present dancers ham it up wrongly. In this depiction of three syphilitic tarts cavorting hopelessly before a battered, drunken toff in a bar, Tudor's intended wretchedness requires straighter interpretation. But Rambert treats *Dark Elegies* (1937) with appropriate seriousness and intensity as a ballet about parents mourning the loss of their children.

The season cannot be summarised without mentioning the consistently high quality of the dancing. Michael Clark, especially praiseworthy, is leaving the company at the end of its London season and will be missed. Last year's recruit from the Royal Ballet School, he performs with an enviably easy loose-limbed elegance, instantly suitable to the Alston style. He also has a dry sense of humour. The other dancers have gained a new, joyful, sleek facility. In the past, they have looked tense and unstretched, but now wear a pleasing elongation and maturity of line.

At the end of an uncertain year without an artistic director, Ballet Rambert has presented itself more positively than for a long time, more vital, and with a sensible energetic attitude to its valuable heritage. Its musical selection remains forward-thinking under the direction of Nicholas Carr. Robert North from London Contemporary steps into the directorship in April to find the company freshly invigorated and suddenly grown-up. □

Charles Fox on Woodie Guthrie

In the red all his life

Woody Guthrie: A Life by JOE KLEIN *Faber* £8.95
Library of Congress Recordings *Elektra EKL271/272 (3 LPs)*
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> On the fourteenth day of April in the year of 1935,
> There struck the worst of dust storms that ever filled the sky.

In his song, 'The Great Dust Storm', Woody Guthrie pinpointed an event that affected everybody living in the belt of land which stretched from Oklahoma across to Colorado and New Mexico. After four summers of drought the topsoil was carried off by high winds. Blackness filled the air. Small animals choked to death. In Guthrie's house in Pampa, Texas, the light bulb in the parlour glowed no brighter than a cigarette. He and his wife had to cover their faces with wet dish-cloths.

Dust storms like that were to ruin the small farmers of Oklahoma, as John Steinbeck described in *Grapes of Wrath*. They also provided Guthrie with a pedigree, an identity he assumed and even came to believe in. His special people were to be the Okies who piled what goods they had on top of their jalopies and set off for California's green valleys. True, Woody himself had been born — in 1912 — in an Oklahoma town, but his father was a would-be businessman and a would-be politician. And although Guthrie later went in for folksy spelling and syntax ('Woody Sez' was the heading for his column in the American *Daily Worker),* as a youth he ransacked the local library.

Where Woody Guthrie rivalled, even outdid, the Okies was at travelling. Wife and children would be deserted at the drop of a stetson and off he would go — hitching lifts, riding freight-cars, sometimes with five shirts on his back, a kind of hiking suitcase. To the folksongs he had learned from his mother he added many more, picked up in hobo camps and along the roadside. He began rehearsing his role as a singer of the people, taking — like Whitman, like Thomas Wolfe — an entire nation for his theme, getting drunk on sheer detail. And like every good American he believed that a problem implied a solution. One practical antidote for poverty was to bring electricity to more farms, which explains the blissful paean to the Grand Coulee Dam ('She heads down the granite canyon and she bends across the lea/like a dancing, prancing stallion down her seaway to the sea').

The tunes Woody used were mostly traditional, but he made up new words, composing his songs at the typewriter. The sentiments sounded radical because he was moving among migrant workers, seeing how the poor and the weak got pushed around. The vision was romantic: a union was not just men and women combining to hitch up their wages but almost a personal myth, a way of reconciling political notions with religious instincts. He even convinced himself that the Buddha led directly to the CIO. Guthrie may or may not have had a party card ('I ain't a communist necessarily', he once wrote, 'but I been in the red all my life'), yet for New York leftists he became a symbol of authenticity, the Noble Savage in person, especially onstage, sharing the platform with Leadbelly or Josh White at Communist Party rallies (Leadbelly upset the more earnest comrades with his songs about knife fights and 'high yaller' women, but promptly made up for it by trotting out the 'Bourgeois Blues').

Guthrie's early reputation was built upon singing over the radio to Okies who had moved to California; for them the songs were almost all that was left of their past. His radical period coincided with unions having to fight for recognition, but by the time World War II was over prosperity had arrived. The labour movement had changed: unions were now American institutions, no longer requiring militants or agit-prop singers; the impoverished Okies had turned into consumers, owning refrigerators, driving shiny cars, about to become TV addicts. Even the folk-song revival at the end of the 1950s was double-edged, quickly becoming a commercial ploy, the songs smoothed out, the topsoil brushed off. 'So long, it's been good to know you', originally a reflection of Okie stoicism, somehow got turned into a perky love song; 'This land is your land', Guthrie's angry response to 'God bless America', ended up becoming a rival to 'The star spangled banner'. Woody began to be taken over by a horde of young men with guitars. The one who became best known, Bob Dylan, even chose, for symbolic rather than economic reasons, to make his debut in New York wearing one of Woody's suits.

GUTHRIE tended to embroider his past, sometimes fancifully ('I was the only person they let interrupt Einstein when he was working'). The value of Joe Klein's biography is that it sorts out the facts from the fiction. And Klein is young enough to be able to write about the ideological turmoils of the 1940s without feeling compelled to take sides. So he sees, very properly, the comic aspect of the way the party line got toed between the Hitler-Stalin pact and the German invasion of Russia, when peace-songs suddenly got supplanted by frantic patriotism. And he fills in the tragic perspective of Guthrie's life. Both Woody's sister and, much later, a daughter by his second wife, were burned to death, while his mother set light to her husband with a kerosene lamp. She suffered, it emerges, from Huntington's chorea, a rare disease passed from one generation to the next, appearing only in middle age but then slowly turning the victim into a vegetable. Guthrie died of it in 1967. Two of his daughters have died within the past seven years.

But the life is not complete without the songs. Woody's voice was dry and hard-edged. Listening to him, as Klein says, was like biting into a lemon. The style is terse, the humour wry. Of the albums listed above only the RCA LP is a British issue; the others are imports, more likely to be found in specialist shops than locally. The Elektra set, three hours of conversation and singing, was recorded for Alan Lomax at the Library of Congress in 1940. Guthrie's account of his life and times rambles fascinatingly, with the manner — even the occasional evasion — as revealing as the matter. The RCA LP is devoted to Dust Bowl ballads: one is based on the plot of *Grapes of Wrath*, while a couple are talking blues — laconic, shrewd, political in a way black blues never were.

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The remainder of the recordings were made for Moe Asch, and released in the United States on Asch's Folkways label and in France on Le Chant du Monde. *This Land Is Your Land*, also available on a cassette, includes 'Pastures of plenty', one of Guthrie's finest songs, as well as 'Grand Coulee Dam', 'Goin' down the road' and the chilling 'Hangknot'. The last-named song also turns up on *Struggle,* an LP which contains the traditional — and marvellous — 'Buffalo skinners', as well as a couple of Guthrie's longer political ballads (both about 'massacres' of union men and their families) and a version of 'Pretty Boy Floyd'.

Outlaws were often looked on as folk heroes in Oklahoma: Jesse James, the Daltons, Belle Starr, but most of all Pretty Boy Floyd, who, so local legend had it, robbed banks in order to pass the loot on to the poor. Guthrie even tended to see Jesus as a kind of raggedy outlaw. 'They laid Jesus Christ in His grave' (on Elektra) is sung to the same tune as 'Jesse James'.

And Guthrie tells Lomax how every town in Oklahoma had 14 or 15 men claiming to be James. One of them, a man with a white beard, was thrown into jail. And when the police stripped his body to bathe him they discovered he had bullet holes — like stigmata — in exactly the right places. □

THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

Much ado about nothing

The Golden Age by A.R. GURNEY Jr *Greenwich*
Best Friends by OLWEN WYMARK *Orange Tree*

A.R. Gurney may earn A for honesty by blithely admitting, as he does in the programme at Greenwich, that he pinched the story of his *Golden Age* from James's *Aspern Papers* and many of his trappings from period melodrama; but his confession doesn't make the play any less unoriginal and implausible, and his candour is no reason for us to reconcile ourselves to its failings.

Bad is bad, and boring is boring, even if a dramatist does proclaim from the Post Office Tower that to write a bad, boring play was precisely his hope and intention. For myself, I found it increasingly hard to find any level on which to enjoy his tale of genteel exploitation in East-Side Manhattan: the grande-dame who sees the prospect of money, company and perhaps a husband for her alcoholic granddaughter in the college teacher who wants to write her biography; the college teacher whose interest in both women hots up when a missing chapter of *The Great Gatsby* is provocatively dandled somewhere within sniffing range.

Mr Gurney's own belief in his characters isn't enough in itself to give them solidity, nor does his obvious and admirable sympathy for all three make any of them sympathetic. Pity Constance Cummings, Angela Thorne and Vincent Marzello, who must sometimes have felt like mirages passing themselves off as oases.

The particular problem facing Miss Cummings, with her cotton-wool wig and hell's-granny charisma, is that she's mainly the repository of a nostalgia shading, at worst, into that awful American worship of celebrity and celebrities. Her character becomes a sort of animate souvenir: a stick of rock, as it were, with 'golden age' imprinted inside instead of Brighton or Blackpool, or an elegant hunk of plaster-of-Paris signed by Fitzgerald, Eliot, Faulkner, Picasso, Trotsky, Freud and others. Mr Marzello's problem is that he must give at least some credibility to such lines as (to the granddaughter) 'you tell her I'm a proud American mustang, and it'll take some time to break me in' or (ditto, after Miss Cummings has menaced him with an ancient musket, seized the stolen manuscript from him, then expired of a heart attack) 'every time I looked at you, I'd see your grandmother standing behind you . . . with a gun.' And the problem for Miss Thorne is summed up in the scene in which she threatens to hit the bottle if Mr Marzello badgers her for *Gatsby,* ominously pours herself a brandy when he continues to do so, and then, after he and we have steeled ourselves for her disintegration, drinks two small glasses and no more.

It is time for the next scene, and so the logic both of the plot and of her character is ignored. Sensationalism dwindles into that offhand bathos, that nothing-very-much which appears to be Miss Thorne's natural habitat. I admired Mr Gurney's *Children,* the family-play his present director, Alan Strachan, brought to London seven years ago; but *The Golden Age* seems to be a distressingly lacklustre effort, all cavity and no tooth.

Olwen Wymark has a way of opening her mental drawers and dumping the contents in an interesting if disconcerting jumble on the audience's laps; and *Best Friends* leaves us picking through some of the same stuff as her recent *Please Shine Down on Me,* including a tense marriage, a troubled younger generation, and a half-senile refugee from an old folks' home.

Indeed, the first two of these subjects are present, not only in the main plot, but in a secondary, parallel one, a sort of dramatic counterpoint emerging from the creative imagination of the main character. She is, you see, an aspiring playwright, secretly at work on a family saga manifestly reflecting many of her own problems.

Tidy away some of the distracting if humanising detail, and there, at the play's centre, is a thoroughly thought-out, felt-out anti-heroine. Mrs Wymark knows all about the writer's insecurity, self-contempt and paranoia, and suggests that all such agonies become the stronger when she's a woman and therefore obliged to tussle with real or supposed (or real *and* supposed) male egotism and a well-developed inferiority complex: 'I'm only a joke, that's the story of my life.' Her protagonist (Ruth Goring) has some nicely observed spats with her by-no-means contemptible husband (Christopher Hancock) and her uncomprehending, malicious daughter (Madeline Church); and the case-study as a whole is only slightly spoiled by an ending whose ironies smack of the sentimental. Husband admires her play, daughter suddenly understands, thaws, starts sorting out her mum's troubles. Life, alas, is rarely so benign. □

We apologize for the temporary absence of the film column. John Coleman is unwell.

TELEVISION

Julian Barnes

Beta minus

ASK ALMOST anyone for a quick cisatlantic characterisation of American TV, and it will probably go like this: technical sophistication, intellectual vapidity, plus an implausible cloned perfection among the participants. A sort of *Brave New World* version of modern life, in other words. So there was, perhaps, a knowing logic behind the American TV adaptation of the very novel which started it all off. By the end of the first hour and a half, though, most viewers must have been regretting that the makers hadn't gone the whole Huxleyan hog and dished out a few easing grammes of *soma* to each viewer. Leaving too many old-style critical instincts undoused, it transpired, was a bit of an Epsilon's idea.

'Aldous Huxley's novel of life in the *distant future*,' soothed the BBC-1 announcer beforehand, as if warning us not to get too upset by it all and do something silly like join the Social Democrats. But the condescending reminder turned out to be oddly helpful, for the production was very *Star Trek,* very 1980s. Scrubbed Arthur Ashe lookalikes hobnobbed woodenly with Tony-Curtis-coiffed whites vaguely familiar from the sort of recent American film which finds only a backstreet distributor over here. Set design was off-the-peg futuro-Deco, and clothes were those predictable tight-fitting pastel dustsheets cut so unappealingly that you wondered how sex could possibly raise its head as often as it was supposed to.

Still, the look of the thing wouldn't have mattered too much if the guts were still inside. Sadly, they weren't. To judge from this version — 'recommended by the National Education Association', we learned at the end — Huxley's future world is a sort of benign bureaucracy where everyone is *soma*'d into contentment. But the writer's vision was much crueller and more probable than that: chapter two begins, you may recall, with eight-month-old Delta babies being given electric shocks to condition them to dislike the countryside (they'd be a drain on public transport if they got to like it). No way of showing that on television, of course; but there are certainly ways of indicating — or reporting — parallel bestialities.

And when we left the Central Hatcheries for the Savage Reservation, you might have expected this to give the makers an advantage, seeing that Huxley located the Reservation in New Mexico. But it all proved merely colourful — about as effectively Savage as that BBC Stone Age village of a few years ago, where all the women had a year's supply of contraceptive pills, and the doctor was only a phone call away. The best one can hope for from this gutless *Brave New World* is that it might have some local repercussions. It's surely time we

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had another home-grown adaptation of one of the early novels; after all, most of the alleged vices of Huxley's fiction — thinness of character, too much talk, heartlessness, wit — would become effortless virtues on television.

THE CURRENT lively series of *Arena* (BBC-2) continued with Gavin Millar interviewing a benign John Huston in his picturesque Mexican hideaway (no roads; no telephone). Dressed in a quaint one-piece pyjama suit cut off at the knees — like a limbo dancer from a Bounty ad —the director notched up a remarkable zero score on the bullshit counter, and evinced a winning lack of grandness about his films (mostly it's just a question of choosing the right actors, he asserted). Quite how modest Huston actually is proved hard to guess: one never quite trusts wizard familiarity with the camera; and he certainly had the necessary spilling ego to camp it up baroquely as Noah leading the animals into the Ark (one was reminded more of Dr Doolittle than of the Bible). But he was also surprisingly sensible about what it's right to expect of an audience, whose narrow range of interests and frail attention span he accepted philosophically: 'I'm not sure', he said of *Fat City*, 'that people care much about the spiritual processes of the defeated — but that's what it was about.'

It made a pleasant contrast to the grand and mumbled inanities of Martin Scorsese on that recent *South Bank Show* (though I learned subsequently that in one respect I unwittingly maligned this director: he wasn't reaching for his little silver neck-ornament all the time, but for his asthma inhaler).

That other white-haired patriarch, sovereign of majolica and cache-pot alike, Arthur Negus, returned with a new series of *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC-1). 'Well, we'll probably get a lot of these today,' was the opening salvo of expert disdain aimed at a timidly proffered *objet* of little *vertu;* 'it's a very cheap and quick method of production.' Arthur pronounced the first week's trawl 'only fair', a judgment all too vigorously endorsed by his team of Sotheby's slickies. 'And the miniature — not worth anything at all *as* a miniature, of course . . . but worth a lot to you.'

The prize encounter between damp-eyed owner and wearily dismissive expert came when a lady turned up with a tea caddy. Yes, really quite a nice tea caddy, remarked the box wallah; of course, most sales would turn up 30 or 40 like it, but this was almost as nice a specimen as you might expect to find; let's say 40 to 50 pounds. A modest enough figure, you might think, and the owner, emboldened perhaps by having her goods not utterly disparaged, remarked that the caddy wasn't going to be used for tea much longer, because her aged mother planned to have her ashes deposited in it. 'Well, it seems a bit *sad* to put your ashes in a beautiful box like *this*,' prickled the expert severely, and began spouting ecclesiastical regulations governing the whereabouts of ashified mothers. An altogether proper sense of priorities. □

ART

John Spurling

Play houses

Continuous Creation *Serpentine*
Asante, Kingdom of Gold *Museum of Mankind*

Most of us could, if invited, create a reasonably expressive room at the Serpentine. Rooms of one's own, as the current series in the *Observer Magazine* pitilessly demonstrates, are great revealers of persons. The five room-makers chosen by the Tate's Michael Compton, however, are professionals and concerned, therefore, as much with their audience as with themselves. If one reacts against them, it is less on account of their individual personalities than because of the sort of hocus-pocus they all variously peddle.

Robert Filliou has a neat, dry, ascetic temperament, a liking for verbal puns and straight lines, diagrams, boxes, formulae and pseudo-scientific equivalences: in one dread word, he is a structuralist. Anna Oppermann abhors a vacuum, fills every available surface with scraps, mementoes and slogans of private significance: her mainly photographic displays, fronted with texts from R.D. Laing, suggest paranoia, withdrawal and neurotic self-consciousness. Paul Thek is an eclectic extrovert, a culture-vulture on a grand scale, plundering art, history and religion quite indiscriminately for whatever will yield a symbol or even a momentary flicker of recognition: he is the archetypal American tourist to whom the world and all it contains appear as one mighty Portobello Road. Bruce Lacey and Jill Bruce (they work as a team) are nostalgic ruralists, all sticks and straw, feathers and dried flowers, goat's milk and manure: their 'celebration and symbolic representation of the cycles of the year' would make an ideal set for a Mummerset monologue by Bernard Miles or Rambling Sid Rumpole.

All this would be entertaining enough if it were not for a more dubious proselytising element in all four displays. The makers of these rooms aspire to be priests rather than artists. Each has an urge to convert the audience to a particular outlook or state of grace, not merely to show something. What they show, indeed, is either ready-made or only minimally worked — its animation consists solely in its context, its symbolism, its arcane purpose. The Serpentine has been transformed into an ecumenical temple, where structuralists with a special interest in Taoism and astrophysics can worship with Filliou, morose Laingians with Oppermann, English pagans with Lacey/Bruce and all the rest with the omnivorous Thek. But since, after all, nothing is required of the devotees but temporary acquiescence nor of the priests but arbitrary personal revelation, the whole affair is a masquerade; a masquerade which lacks any relieving aesthetic dimension and which in effect parodies what it pretends earnestly to invoke. It is in a way, you might say, a fair picture of a certain aspect of our Western World, but I'm afraid these playboys and playgirls didn't mean it that way.

ONE ENTERS the rain-forest at the start of the Asante exhibition with a great lightening of the spirit. Of course it is a mocked-up rain-forest, nothing to compare with the real thing (where the main difficulty is to keep your feet on the muddy path) or even with the Palm House at Kew (where the humidity is genuine), and there are more mock-ups to follow — village huts, a courtyard of the royal palace at Kumase, even a full-size tableau of a chief and his courtiers — but they are replicas of reality, not substitutes for it. The purpose of the show being to explain and illustrate a particular and ascertainable reality, namely the history and nature of the Asante civilization, everything here is real, not only the objects — pots, clothes, carvings, gold ornaments, swords, guns, a state umbrella, a vulture-head talisman, a priest's fly-whisk and grass-skirt — but more importantly the system of customs and beliefs that supports them.

There is, for example, a dimly-lit room containing a row of blackened wooden stools laid on their sides, just as they would be displayed in an Asante home. Each stool represents the ancestor who owned it. Not every dead Asante becomes an ancestor; those who die an untoward death are not so honoured and their bodies are buried in the village midden instead of the cemetery. But because the display of blackened stools still has meaning for the Asantes and demands special marks of respect, the stools in the exhibition are only replicas. The visitor is not required to remove his shoes or slip his toga off the left shoulder, but only to look and understand. The division between art and study on the one hand and religious and tribal participation on the other is not fudged and blurred for cheap effect, as at the Serpentine, but tactfully and seriously emphasised.

The exhibition is a model of its kind —comprehensive without being overstocked and, in spite of its title, comparatively frugal with the glitter. M. D. McLeod's accompanying book (British Museum £12.95 or £6.95) is a little inaccurate on the British position in the Gold Coast in the 19th century, but otherwise packed with curious and fascinating detail. The BM ought to send the PM a replica of the backward facing *sankofa* bird which symbolises the Asante proverb that 'one should not fear to turn back in order to sort out a difficult problem'. □

Weekend competition

No 2660 **Set by Sir Gel**

Peter Shore said the other day that Mrs Thatcher was 'poisoning Britain'. Clearly a crime on this scale requires a professional to write it up, so let's have extracts of up to 120 words from the story as told by Conan Doyle, Dorothy L. Sayers or Agatha Christie. By 3 April.

No 2657 **Set by Dan Kavanagh**

Greetings-card verses sponsored by the Arts Council literature panel.

Report **By Mercy Dash**

As Martin Fagg noted, this comp could be approached in one of several ways: verse stuffed with literary/cultural allusions; verse satirising the Arts Council itself; or simply verse which was rather less saccharine than the stuff customarily found on cards. Seven quid each for those printed, which are a representative selection from an extremely stylish entry.

May I offer congrats on your *publication/exhibition?*
The critics *acclaim/disclaim* you without
altercation/contrition;
And thanks for the party your *publisher/gallery*
threw,
The wine was *excellent/awful*—I will give them
their due.
I've purchased a *copy/picture,* I want you to sign it.
It will *sit/hang* on my *shelf/wall,* where folks can't
malign it.
May America grant you *the paperback rights/a*
travelling show,
For everything comes to the person *who fights/*
with dough.
O. BANFIELD

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The butchers of the NHS
Don't always make a *total* mess
Of every simple little op. —
Unless, of course, you chance to cop
The one who's senile, stoned or blind;
So rest assured, *relax* and find
Refreshment in reflecting, baby,
You'll soon be up and out — well, maybe.

RUFUS STONE

My weakness now for D'Oyly Carte
Is gone — it is not art;
I will not woo you with a tune
Or rhymes like 'moon' and 'June'.
Oh be my abstract Valentine;
Hung upside down you're just as fine
As limned with modern painters' tricks;
Oh will you be my pile of bricks?

PETER ALEXANDER

In the branched valves of my heart, sleeping
like a big wild lion after lunch,
muff-pawed, electrically purring,
curls compactly the wish I send you.
Open the card, it will come leaping
fresh as a substitute from the bench,
adept and animate, devouring
your surprise, daft with joy to find you.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Your birthday is a pockmarked face
from a line of willing suspects, cleanly-shaven

in a scrubland of beards. Your place
is to stand, unruffled, like a solitary raven,

croaking thanks upon a vanity case
of bound and manacled gifts, as quietly craven

as a captured triple-agent. This space,
spotlit as for some private matinee, is your haven.

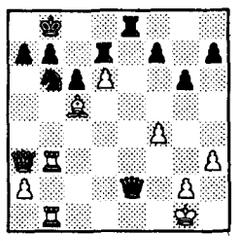
BILL GREENWELL

Chess

Tony Miles

Due to pressure on space this week we are only able to publish the problem and solution to No 220.

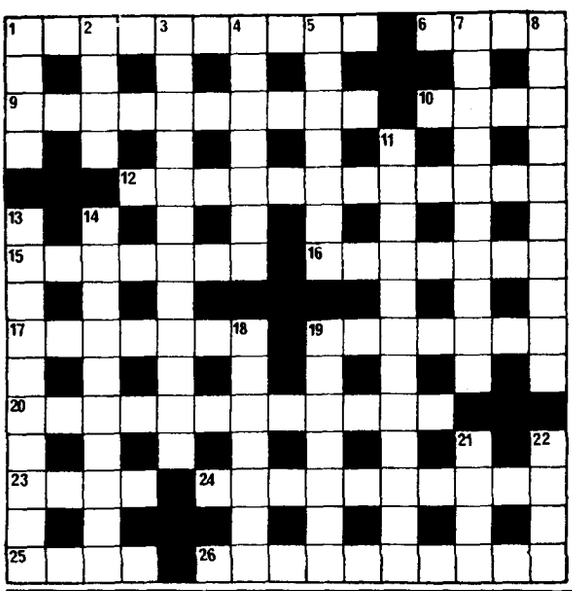
Problem 222
White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked no later than 1 April.



Solution to Problem 220
1.R-Q3! K-B3 (if RxP, RxNch, and nothing else helps); 2.R-Q1!! RxP (if . . . RxR; 3.P-N8 = Q or . . . R-N3; 3.B-N2); 3.RxN. Resigns.

Weekend Crossword 1377

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1377, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 31 March.



ACROSS

1 Hope for France is without charge for the vengeful (10)
6 Animal loses its tail in the portico (4)
9 Old men discovered by Knight in the midst of terrible dangers (10)
10 A friend's address is something precious (4)
12 Hot on turning Ginger belligerent (12)
15 Counsellor reads roughly about six (7)
16 The paper is back for everyone in the morning (7)
17 Stints one between dons and politicians (7)
19 Kind of cycle which gives me something refreshing (7)
20 Familiar language contains nought remote (12)
23 A vessel partly open (4)
24 In this composer there is rain about after it is most fair (10)
25 Celebrated dynasty (4)
26 Building where aerial battle is staged in front of the Queen (10)

DOWN

1 After five time is up for a star (4)
2 Pure creature (4)
3 A fine time for the Commonwealth team's scorer? (6,6)
4 Waugh's time-server (7)
5 Mount in strength although a Third World country (7)
7 The star's right is drinking wihout request for payment (3,7)
8 For example in a union loyalty is expected (10)
11 Be a nut going wild in the club for something to eat (6,6)
13 Transport with Bach mass on (6,4)
14 Drill after cricket is too much exertion (10)
18 Reverse when one is several games behind? (7)
19 Eating-places which make one rage in writing (7)
21 'No children run to — their sire's return' (Gray) (4)
22 Market for the just (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1375

A	L	T	I	T	U	D	E		A	D	E	P	T	S
L		R	E		I		S		E		A		L	
C	H	A	R	A	B	A	N	C		S	Y	R	I	A
O		I		B		M		R		P		T		P
V	O	L	C	A	N	O		A	B	A	S	H	E	D
E			G		N		P	I		E		A		
	S	O	U	S	E	D	H	E	R	R	I	N	G	S
A		P				W		T			O		H	
S	O	U	N	D	R	E	C	O	R	D	I	N	G	
H		L		R		D		G		E			E	
S	T	E	W	A	R	D		E	N	F	I	E	L	D
T		N		I		I		T		I		P		I
A	C	T	O	N		N	I	H	I	L	I	S	T	S
N		L		E		G		E		E		O		O
D	R	Y	A	D	S		C	R	O	S	S	M	A	N

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from whom further information is available. Information also available from

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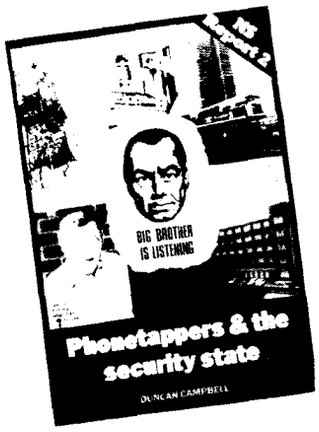

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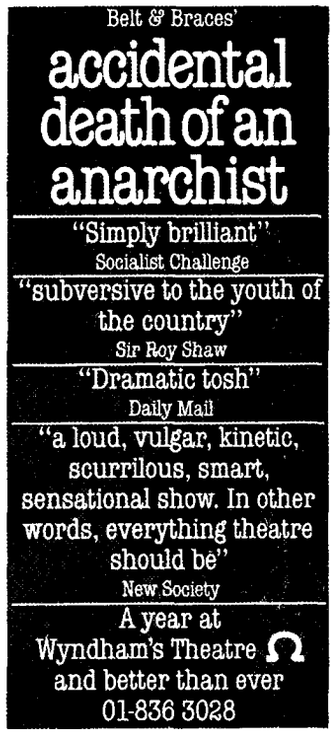
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SOCIALIST HUMANIST ASSOCIATION – Inaugural meeting at Conway Hall, London WC1, on Sunday 22 March at 2 p.m. Details: Colin Mills, 41A Chesham Road, Amersham. (02403 6103).

THE IRISH IN BRITAIN: History Workshop 10 a.m. Sat. 25 & Sun. 26 April. Poly of N. London, Holloway Road. Tkts: £3 waged, £1 unwaged, from: 207 Sumatra Rd, NW6.

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new community

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